

# Recent archaeological research in Iran – Prehistory to Iron Age

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In spite of considerable hardships of the late 1970s and several years afterwards, archaeological research in Iran never completely halted. A few Iranian expeditions were at work, even during the difficult years of the war. Since the 1990s, nevertheless, archaeological research in Iran experienced a considerable reinvigoration. The amount of field expeditions has risen to more than 250 programs in the Iranian year 1384 (March 2005–March 2006), including a dozen foreign – Iranian joint missions since 2000. The Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO; “Sazemān-e Mirās-e Farhangi-e Kešvar”), the successor of the National Organization for the Protection of the Ancient Monuments of Iran and the (“Sazemān-e melli-ye hefāzāt-e āsār-e bāstāni-ye Iran”) since 1985, called Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (hereafter: ICHTO) since 2004, supervises this ambitious program of research and conservation. Archaeological research is organized by one of the subdivisions of ICHTO, the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (hereafter: ICAR).

From the beginning, the re-awakening archaeological activity in Iran had a wide array of interests in all periods. New research and excavation programs on prehistoric, early historical, historical, as well as Islamic periods were planned, leading to an augmented scientific information and public awareness of Iran’s rich past. The first sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1979 were the ziqqurat of Čoġā Zanbil, the Achaemenid capital Persepolis, and the fabulous architectural complex of Meidān-e Emām in Esfahān. It took over 20 years for Takt-e Soleimān and Soltāniye to follow. Pāsārgādae and Bam were added in 2004.

Besides scientific research programs, the growing demands of a rapidly evolving economy and demographic expansion as well as the will to develop the tourism industry put many new constraints on cultural heritage management. Ancient sites tend to cluster in environmentally favorable areas, the same sought out by modern human settlements and industries. With an expanding economy, a growing energy demand and a population almost doubled since 1979, serious threats are imposed on ancient sites, necessitating nu-

merous rescue works alongside regular research programs. The Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) faces this challenge by organizing various programs, including the creation of a series of well-planned research projects in the form of “National Projects”. By the end of 2004, National Projects amounted close to 60, including archaeological, ethnographical, and architectural studies. In addition to Iranian archaeologists, foreign missions have again become active in Iran since 2000 within the framework of “Joint Missions”. In 2004, ICAR called out for international scientific support, for the first time, facing the construction of the Sivand Dam in Fars province which posed a direct threat to several archaeological sites in the Bolāġi Valley. The first large scale rescue project ever launched in Iran is the salvage excavations in Bolāġi Valley, immediately south of Pasargadae, the capital of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid empire.

Iranian archaeology has thus gained a considerable momentum over the last decade, a fact that is also reflected in a series of symposia organized at a national level and, since 1997, also with international participation<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, a

<sup>1</sup> Several conference volumes have already appeared. In 1994, a first attempt at reanimating the tradition of archaeological symposia was made (see Mirās-e farhangi 12, 1994; M. Mousavi 1998, Chegini 1997). The publication of five volumes of “Tarīk-e me’māri va šahr-sāzi-ye Iran (History of architecture and town planning in Iran)”, relates to the first conference held in 1996 (1374) in Arg-e Bam, which was followed by a second conference in 1999 and the publication of its proceedings. Since 2000, ICAR has begun to organize archaeological symposia with regional focus, the first being held in Zahedān (southeastern Iran) in 2001, followed by conferences in Orumiye (northwestern Iran) 2004 (Azarnoush 2005 (1384)), and Gorgān (southeast of the Caspian sea) 2005. A conference devoted especially to the study of Iron Age Grey Ware was held in Tābriz in 2002 on the occasion of the discovery of an Iron Age cemetery near Masjed-e Kabud. A symposium on archaeometry (Azarnoush 2003 (1381)), was held in 2003 in Tehrān. In addition, ICAR has, since 2000, taken up the policy of holding 1–2 day seminars in relation to work at specific sites. A considerable number of the latter has been organized since. Several more international and national symposia are planned for the year 2006, including an international symposium on the Archaeology of western Iran, to be held in Kermānšāh (western Iran), and another on the problems of Iron Age in Iran, to be held in Qom (Central Iran).

new generation of Iranian archaeologists has begun to present their work to the outside world.

In the meantime, some of the joint expeditions that were deprived of further fieldwork opportunities since 1979 have fulfilled their homework duties, and several important final reports have been published<sup>2</sup>. The publication of the final reports was, and remains, *sine qua non* for the re-admission of those expeditions who had field activities in Iran previous to the Islamic Revolution.

Thanks to these activities, a considerable amount of data has been collected that promises to shed new light on old questions. Unfortunately, an important part of this new information remains largely unknown to the non-Persian speaking public. Several publication series in Persian have been released<sup>3</sup>, but only very few of these have been published in other languages<sup>4</sup>. With some exceptions our Iranian colleagues have thus not been able to present their work to the international public. Therefore, it is the aim of this research report to make some of the important new contributions of resumed archaeological research in Iran known to a larger and non-Persian-speaking public, and to discuss the impact of the new data

on our current understanding of the cultural and historical development of Iran in its many and varied aspects<sup>5</sup>.

That the interest in Iranian archaeology is high outside Iran has already become evident when, for the first time since 1979, a major exhibition staging masterpieces of prehistoric and historical Iranian art was opened in Vienna in 2001<sup>6</sup>. A second major exhibition with a topical focus on the role of Iran as a country rich in raw materials was inaugurated in 2004 in Bochum<sup>7</sup>. This exhibition was one of the first perceptible results of renewed collaboration between Iran and foreign research institutions. Finally, the British Museum presented an exhibition on the Achaemenid period in 2005<sup>8</sup>.

## Surveys

A number of surveys, of varying intensity and means, have been carried out over the last few years<sup>9</sup>. Most important is the adoption of intensive field walking survey as the first investigation before rescue projects, such as those recently carried out in the Darre-ye Bolāgi/Sivand Dam area. These mostly cover areas that have formerly never been thoroughly investigated. Systematic application of a "landscape archaeology" approach, including remote sensing and aerial photography, is increasing and will certainly improve the detection rate of sites especially in arid areas<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Most noteworthy, the results of Louis Vanden Berghe's Lorestan expeditions (Haerinck/Overlaet 1996; Haerinck/Overlaet 1998; Haerinck/Overlaet 1999; Overlaet 2003), the reports on The Oriental Institute's expeditions to Lorestan (Schmidt et al. 1989) and Khuzestān (Delougaz et al. 1996; A. Alizadeh 2003). The second volume of the Bastām reports (Kleiss 1988), a monograph on the work in Bistun (Kleiss/Calmeyer 1996), and final reports on the excavations at Tal-i Malyān (Nicholas 1990; Carter 1996; Sumner 2003), Tappe Yahya (Lamberg-Karlovsky/Beale 1986; Damerow/Englund 1989; Lamberg-Karlovsky/Potts 2001; Magee et al. 2004), and Hasanlu (Marcus 1996; Danti 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The periodical "Asar" was the first periodical released by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization immediately after the revolution (no. 1, 1979 = 1359). It contains articles mostly on Islamic architecture, but also on archaeological research. The activities of the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR) of the ICHTO are presented in the periodical "Gozarēshāye bāstān šenāsi (Archaeological Reports)" (no. 1, 1997 = 1376; no. 2, 2004 = 1382, since then more regularly) and a related monograph series "Selseleh gozarēshāye bāstān šenāsi (Archaeological Reports Monograph Series)", a considerable number of which has been published since 2001. Reports on archaeological, ethnographical and linguistic research appear also in "Nāme-ye pajōhešgāh-e Mirās-e Farhangī, Quarterly (Letter of the Research Center of the Cultural Heritage Organization, Quarterly)" published by the office of the Research Deputy of the ICHO (no. 1, 2003 = 1381). Iran University Press is responsible for the periodical "Majale-ye bāstān šenāsi va tarīkh (Iranian Journal of Archaeology and History)" (no. 1, 1986) and occasional monographs. The Anthropology Department of Tehrān University has recently released their own periodical, Nāme-ye ensānshenāsi, that also contains contributions on archaeology.

<sup>4</sup> The British Institute of Persian Studies has released a series of short newsletters on Iranian Archaeology (Sarkhosh Curtis/Simpson 1997; Sarkhosh Curtis/Simpson 1998; Sarkhosh Curtis/Simpson 2000), and has also printed translations or summaries of articles in their periodical "Iran".

<sup>5</sup> Such a research report would not have been possible without the generous support and contribution of all the field directors, individual excavators, and researchers whose works are reported here. We thank all of them for their trustful co-operation, providing internal reports, unpublished photographs and personal communications as well as written summaries. We also greatly acknowledge the help of Hamid Fahimi from ICAR in various steps of preparation of this article. Naturally, such a report can never achieve anything close to completeness. We have tried to include as much information as was available, from internal and published reports, site visits and personal communication. Finally, it goes without saying that the opinions expressed in the following report mirror the views of the authors of this report. References to individual excavators and researchers are expressly marked and referred to.

<sup>6</sup> Seipel 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Stöllner et al. 2004b.

<sup>8</sup> Curtis/Tallis 2005.

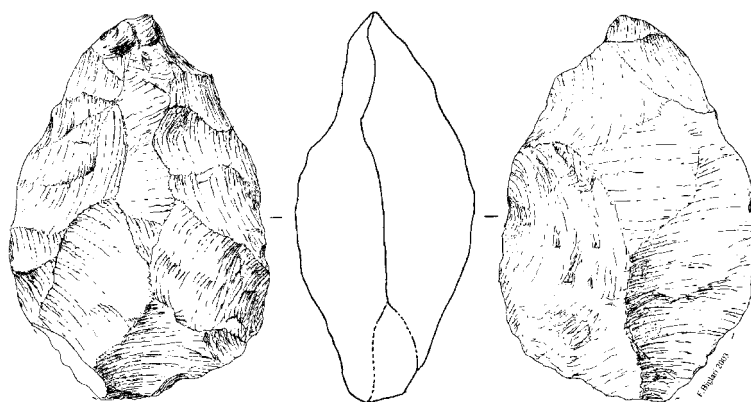
<sup>9</sup> Surveys have been carried out in almost every province of Iran, too numerous to be listed here. Survey results will therefore be mentioned in the single chronological paragraphs whenever they add information relevant to the discussion of that specific period.

<sup>10</sup> As a good example, the work by Kourosh Roustaei from the Iranian Center of Archaeological Research, currently carried out in the Sāhrud area yielded many promising results. Lecture by Kourosh Roustaei, 09. 11. 2005, Gorgān.

Several regions have been subject to large scale survey projects during the 1960's and 1970's. Abbas Alizadeh has answered the challenge to study the material deriving from various pre-revolution survey projects stored in the National Museum, Tehrān, and has built up a "pottery bank" plus database that should allow scholars to gain a comprehensive picture of the representative material culture in various regions in all periods. He has so far concentrated mainly on Kuzestān, and has carried out additional surveys in this area as well<sup>11</sup>. The revelation of the staggering number of sites previously recorded, for example during Robert Wenke's survey in 1973, which no longer exist was the saddest outcome of this survey, making the pottery bank in the National museum all the more important.

### Palaeolithic to Epipalaeolithic

Research into the Palaeolithic period in Iran gained considerable momentum in the 1990's<sup>12</sup>, although there was hardly any earlier research tradition to build upon<sup>13</sup>. The first official investigations were carried out in 1988 by 'Enayatollah Amirlu who excavated a test trench in the Epipalaeolithic open site Qal'e Asgar, in the vicinity of Damāvand, that yielded a microlithic assemblage<sup>14</sup>. Since the early 1990's Feridoun Biglari, later often in cooperation with Saman Heydari, undertook numerous field surveys, especially in the Kermanshāh area but also elsewhere<sup>15</sup>. Other surveying teams also recorded Palaeolithic and Epipalaeolithic sites<sup>16</sup>, and the number of known sites has thus augmented considerably. Numerous open sites are among these, underlining the importance of intensive field walking surveys as



**Fig. 1**  
Ganj Par, Gilān,  
Acheulian hand axe  
(drawing courtesy  
F. Biglari).

opposed to the earlier emphasis on cave sites. Establishing the Center for Palaeolithic Research at the Iran National Museum in 2001 finally provided an administrative frame for this specialized research, and a considerable output in new research results has been achieved<sup>17</sup>. The Center engages not only in fieldwork, but also in the re-studying of find assemblages from previous excavations stored in the Museum, such as the materials from earlier excavations at Yāfteh, Ġar-e Ġar and Kašāfrud.

The lower Palaeolithic in Iran is characterized by two different technological traditions, a core chopper industry, and an Acheulian industry that so far was found only in the Zāgros sites<sup>18</sup>. With the newly found site Ganj Par in the Kaluraz valley<sup>19</sup>, an assemblage with core choppers alongside a clear Acheulian tradition (**Fig. 1; 2**) has now been recorded in an area where formerly no Acheulian material had ever been noticed.

New evidence for the middle Palaeolithic period draws heavily on results from the neighboring countries. Newly available dates from middle Palaeolithic assemblages from Tadžikistan and Turkey, comparable to the Zāgros Mousterian, allow now an earlier dating of these assemblages to 250,000 B.P. Former opinions usually placed the beginning of the Zagros Mousterian to around



**Fig. 2**  
Ganj Par, Gilān, partial  
hand axe (photograph  
courtesy F. Biglari).

<sup>11</sup> A. Alizadeh et al. 2004.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview on the status of research until 1979, see Smith 1986. For everything after, the authors owe sincere thanks to Feridoun Biglari and Saman Heydari who generously shared their knowledge and experience of Palaeolithic research in Iran with them.

<sup>13</sup> Before 1979, Palaeolithic research used to be carried out exclusively by foreign missions, most of them with a strong focus on southwestern Iran and the Zagros mountains. The younger generation of Iranian archaeologists, however, has demonstrated a strong interest in this field.

<sup>14</sup> Amirlu 1991.

<sup>15</sup> Biglari/Abdi 1999; Biglari 2000; Biglari/Taheri 2001; Heydari/Ghassidian 2005.

<sup>16</sup> During the Qomrud survey, M. Kaboli recorded an important Epipalaeolithic open station (Kaboli 2000). Three Upper Palaeolithic – Epipalaeolithic rock shelters have been recorded in Lorestan (Yadollahi et al. 2004). Other so far unpublished but newly recorded sites have been found during surveys by Ismail Alipour in the Mahābād area, by Ali Reza Dashtizadeh in the Marv Dašt and Kazerun area, and by Ali Reza Khosrowzadeh in Bardsir in Kermān.

<sup>17</sup> Members of the Center for Palaeolithic Research are now called in regularly when Palaeolithic assemblages are spotted by other fieldwork teams, and they have achieved a steady flow of new information. Short reports appear regularly in either *Majale-ye bastānšenāsi va tarīḡ* or *Gozareš-hāye bastānšenāsi*, and English reports of important sites have been published (Biglari/Abdi 1999; Biglari et al. 2000; Biglari/Heydari 2001; Biglari/Abdi 2003; Biglari et al. 2004; Roustaei et al. 2004).

<sup>18</sup> Smith 1986, 16; new assemblages are now reported for Siwatu (Jaubert et al. 2005, 18–19).

<sup>19</sup> Biglari et al. 2004: the site is located immediately below the Iron Age settlement site of Tappe Jalāliye and was found during the Joint Iranian-Japanese investigations there (see below, Iron Age).





**Map 1**

Iran Palaeolithic sites. 1 Varjowi. 2 Gol Tappe. 3 Čaghmaghli. 4 Ganj Par. 5 Qal'e Asgar. 6 Komišan. 7 Dehdez. 8 Qar-e Mar Tārik. 9 Yāfteh. 10 Qal'e Bozi. 11 Mirak. 12 Ġar-e Kaftār Kun. 13 Sefidāb. 14 Niāsar. 15 Holābād. 16 Qal'e Guše.

80–70,000 B.P. In Iran proper, various new projects and finds add new evidence for the Zagros middle Palaeolithic<sup>20</sup>. Most importantly, the former void in the highland regions of central Iran is slowly beginning to fill up. Middle Palaeolithic sites have now been recorded in various places

in the Kāšān and Natanz area<sup>21</sup>, in Esfahān<sup>22</sup>, in Semnān<sup>23</sup>, and in the Qazvin plain<sup>24</sup>. It seems that a close correlation between travertine domes – the location of ancient springs – and Mouster-

<sup>20</sup> The joint Iranian-French Research Team of the Center for Palaeolithic Research together with the University of Bordeaux have begun test excavations in the Ġar-e Mar Tarik near Bistun (Jaubert et al. 2005, 19). A Joint Iranian-Belgian Team from the Center of Palaeolithic Research and the University of Liège have tested the cave of Yāfteh near Khorramābād in Lurestān (Otte et al., in prep.; pers. comm. F. Biglari; see also Shidrang 2005). New sites were also recorded in Āzarbāijān (Biglari/Ghafari 2005 (1384); Heydari/Ghassidian 2005 (1384)).

<sup>21</sup> Artifacts of Levallois tradition were registered in open sites along the desert fringe during the Arisman survey (Chegini et al. in prep.), and within travertine formations close to important springs in Holābād (Arisman survey), in Kāšān (next to the Ġar-e Kaftār Kun or "Hyenae blood cave", pers. comm. Feridoun Biglari) and in Niāsar (Biglari 2003).

<sup>22</sup> A test excavation was carried out in a Middle Palaeolithic rockshelter of the Qal'e Bozi sites group by a joint team from the Center for Palaeolithic Research and the Department of Geology of the University of Esfahān (pers. comm. F. Biglari).

<sup>23</sup> Mirak is an open site in the vicinity of Semnān, surveyed by H. Rezvani, Feridoun Biglari and Kourosh Roustaie (pers. comm. F. Biglari).

<sup>24</sup> Biglari 2004 (1382).

ian sites can be established<sup>25</sup>, including caves and open sites. A comparison between the lithic assemblages from these newly found highland sites and the Zāgros material clearly demonstrates that the amount of Levallois elements is much higher in the Plateau sites, making the formerly observed lack of distinctive Levallois assemblages in the Zāgros sites a regional particularity.

As for the Upper Palaeolithic, a first AMS dating of 30,000 B.P. for the Zagros Aurignacian is now available, deriving from the site of Malaverd in the Kermānshāh province where a characteristic Aurignacian assemblage (**Fig. 3**) was found<sup>26</sup>. The date matches well with other known Aurignacian assemblages in Iran<sup>27</sup>. A second new observation is that, as had been the case with the middle Palaeolithic, sites dating to the upper Palaeolithic period are now also found on the central part of the Iranian Plateau. The open site Sefidāb discovered during the Sialk Reconsideration Project's survey in the vicinity of Sialk, southeast of Kāshān, is the first site outside the Zagros mountains where an Aurignacian industry has been recorded<sup>28</sup>. A second site with an Aurignacian assemblage, originally found by the Arisman team and now explored by the newly formed TISARP project, is recorded in Qale Guše/Bardia<sup>29</sup>, another open site on the fringe of the desert.

Important Epipalaeolithic assemblages have recently been recorded from various rockshelter sites during rescue operations of the Karun III Dam flooding area, among which the most important is Dehdez<sup>30</sup>. Epipalaeolithic open sites with a Zārziān assemblage have also recently been found in several places on the central part of the Iranian highland<sup>31</sup>, once more emphasizing the importance of field walking survey in order to obtain a better coverage of Palaeolithic and Epipalaeolithic site distribution. This shows that, in contrast to earlier opinions<sup>32</sup>, the high plateau was equally occupied during the early holocene.



**Fig. 3**  
Malaverd Cave,  
Early Upper  
Palaeolithic lithic  
assemblage  
(photograph courtesy  
F. Biglari).

The transition from Epipalaeolithic to Neolithic is covered in the sequence of the Komišān Cave in East Māzandarān, a cave site in the vicinity of the Hotu Cave. Systematic surface collection and cleaning and sampling of a looting pit within the framework of a larger surveying program in East Māzandarān directed by Ali Mahforuzi from the Gorgān office of ICHTO<sup>33</sup> revealed assemblages, not only from Epipalaeolithic<sup>34</sup>, but also later elements. The assemblage closely resembles the material from the well-known Hotu and Kamarband Caves<sup>35</sup>.

The study of the assemblages recently recorded clearly demonstrates the trend towards greater regional variation since the Upper Palaeolithic<sup>36</sup>. However, at the present stage of research, the relations between these various assemblages are not yet understood and no developmental lines can be traced. The existence of Epipalaeolithic sites, beyond the Zāgros mountains on the central part of the Iranian Plateau, which could have been predecessors of the Neolithic communities that later settled there, is another important observation that requires the rethinking of old models on the neolithisation of the Iranian highlands.

## Neolithic (7<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C.)

**Guša Tappe/Ardabil:** Soundings at Guša Tappe, located within the area of Šahryeri/Meškinšahr (see below, Iron Age, Šahryeri) were carried out by Ali Reza Hojabri Nowbari from Tarbiat Modar-

<sup>25</sup> Saman Heydari, Poster at the 4<sup>th</sup> ICAANE in Berlin, 2004; Heydari/Ghassidian 2005 (1384).

<sup>26</sup> A rescue operation at the cave site of Malaverd revealed a lithic assemblage of more than 3000 pieces, deriving from the sieved dump left during construction work. Samples were also retrieved from this sieving and have been investigated at the University of Liège, Belgium, by Marcel Otte (pers. comm. F. Biglari).

<sup>27</sup> Olszewski 1993, 191.

<sup>28</sup> Biglari 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Conard et al. in press; Chegini/Helwing in prep.

<sup>30</sup> Pers. comm. A. Dashtizadeh, via F. Biglari.

<sup>31</sup> In the Qomrud survey area, see Kaboli 2000, sites 74 and 90, see 62–63 pl. 1; in the Arisman survey area at Qal'e Guše 4, see Chegini et al. in prep.

<sup>32</sup> Smith (1986) describes the Zarziān as an upland adaptation in the Zagros mountains with a preference for altitudes of 400–800 m a.s.l.

<sup>33</sup> Mahforuzi 2004 (1382); Naderi 2004 (1382).

<sup>34</sup> Shidrang 2004 (1382).

<sup>35</sup> Coon 1951; Coon 1952.

<sup>36</sup> Smith 1986, 25.



**Map 2**

Iran Neolithic sites. 1 Guša Tappe. 2 Tappe Jolbar. 3 Kani Mikāiil Cave. 4 Čoḡā Āhuwān and Čoḡā Golān. 5 Deh Hajj. 6 Darre-ye Bolāḡi site 73. 7 Marv Dašt sites: Tappe Jari, Tappe Muški, Tal-e Bākun. 8 Tol-e Baši. 9 Češme 'Ali. 10 Tappe Pardis. 11 Tappe Ozbaki. 12 Qomrud. 13 Tappe Sialk and Tappe Šurābe. 14 Arisman. 15 Tappe Deh Keir. 16 Arg-e Dašt C. 17 Aq Tappe. 18. Golestān Park. 19 Komišān.

ress University, Tehrān, in 2003 and 2004<sup>37</sup>. The sequence of cultural layers begins with Hajji Firuz-related material, followed by a settlement layer with round structures (probably pits) of the Chalcolithic to Bronze Age, and finally some Iron Age dolmen. The ceramics indicate close relations with the Orumiye Lake area.

**Tappe Jolbar/West Azarbāidjān:** The settlement mound Tappe Jolbar, located on the western shore of Lake Orumiye, was investigated by Mr. Hossein Razzaghi from the office of ICHTO in

Orumiye with a series of trial trenches in 1996 in order to register the site on the list of national monuments<sup>38</sup>. Eight small soundings were dug around the base of the site, and a larger exposure was dug from the summit down to virgin soil about 7 m below. The pottery consists of a classical Dalma ware assemblage including husking trays. Noteworthy are some bone harpoons. Apparently, sea shell collecting in the nearby Lake Orumiye formed part of the subsistence strategies of the Neolithic community at Tappe Jolbar<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Reported in a lecture by Ali Reza Hojrabi Nobari and Akbar Pourfaraj, 09.11. 2005, Gorgān.

<sup>38</sup> Razzaghi/Fahimi 2004.

<sup>39</sup> Razzaghi/Fahimi 2004, 59.

**Kāni Mikāiil Cave/Kordestān:** Soundings carried out by Kourosh Roustaei and Hassan Rezvani from ICAR in 2001 in the Kāni Mikāiil Cave, located 2 km north of the Karaftu Cave<sup>40</sup>, revealed evidence for a seasonal Neolithic occupation of the cave, characterized by a Dalma pottery assemblage<sup>41</sup>.

**Mehrān Plain/Ilām:** In the years 1986–1988 and again in 2002, surveys were carried out in the plain of Mehrān in an area defined by two rivers, the Čangule and the Konjānčam, first by Ali Mohammed Khalilian from the Ilām office of ICHO, with the aid of Jebrail Nokandeh during the later seasons, and following the subsequent death of Khalilian, by Nokandeh, Feridun Biglari and Saman Heydari<sup>42</sup>. Altogether, 62 sites were registered, many of which show considerable damage, since they are located on the former front line of the Iran-Iraq war. Among the registered sites, two have potentialities of revealing considerable Neolithic and Chalcolithic layers<sup>43</sup>. One is Čoġā Āhuwān, with a sequence from the Neolithic to the protoliterate period and known from surface finds only (Fig. 4; 5). The second is Čoġā Golān (“Choga Khulaman”)<sup>44</sup> on the bank of the Konjānčam that originally consisted of two independent mounds (Fig. 6). Čoġā Golān 1 has been mapped and investigated by means of soundings. Apparently, Čoġā Golān 1 is an aceramic Neolithic site of the 9<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C., contemporary and comparable to Tappe ‘Ali Koš, with a lithic inventory consisting of small blades and bullet cores, as well as irregular flakes (Fig. 7). A fair amount of the material consisted of obsidian. Čoġā Golān 2 is also of Neolithic date but has not yet been investigated.

**Deh Hajj/Lorestān:** A badly damaged Late Neolithic settlement mound was noticed by Reinhard Bernbeck and Susan Pollock from Binghamton University on the occasion of traveling in the Borudjerd valley<sup>45</sup>. The site is noteworthy since its pottery assemblage with heavily straw tempered wares and some with brown paint seems to relate to the Late Neolithic Bāq-e Now ware, otherwise not attested in this area so far.



**Fig. 4**  
Čoġā Āhuwān,  
Late Susiana pottery  
from surface collection  
(photograph courtesy  
J. Nokandeh).



**Fig. 5**  
Čoġā Āhuwān,  
protoliterate pottery  
from surface collection  
(photograph courtesy  
J. Nokandeh).



**Fig. 6**  
Čoġā Golān,  
general view of the  
site (photograph courtesy  
J. Nokandeh).

**Tappe Ĵari, Tappe Muški, Tal-e Bākun/Fars:** Until recently, an insolvable controversy over the Neolithic sequence of Fars prevented any reasonable interpretation of the prehistory of the Marv Dašt. It was Louis Vanden Berghe who first suggested that the site of Ĵari represented the

<sup>40</sup> Karaftu Cave has also been excavated recently, but only little information is available (Lahafian 2004, 8).

<sup>41</sup> Roustaei et al. 2002.

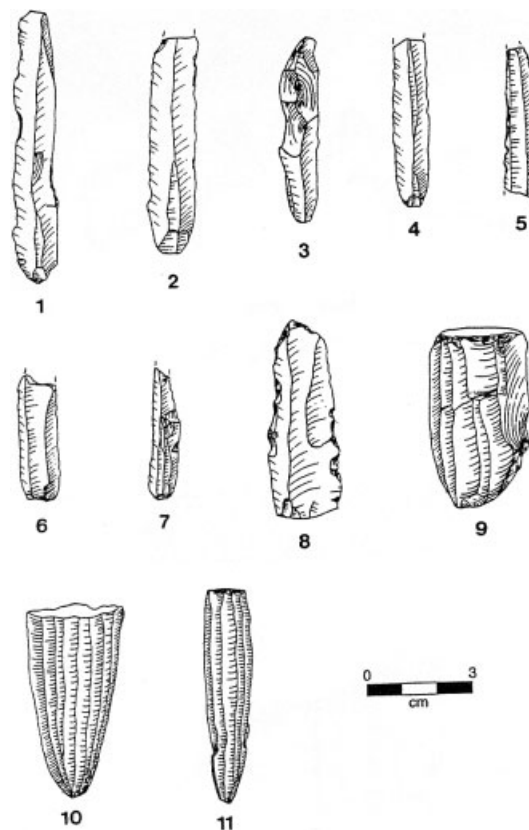
<sup>42</sup> The plain is also described by Biglari et al. 2000; A. Alizadeh 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Abbas Alizadeh from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago had originally proposed a research project targeting these two sites, but could not proceed with this due to the American – led war in Iraq.

<sup>44</sup> Khalilian 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Bernbeck/Pollock 2000–2001.





**Fig. 7**  
Čoġā Golān, lithic  
assemblage from  
surface collection  
(drawing F. Biglari,  
courtesy J. Nokandeh).

earlier, and Muški the later Neolithic of Fars, followed by the Bākun material. However, the Japanese expedition excavating in prehistoric sites in Fars soon proposed a different sequence, with Muški forming the oldest, Jari the second, and Bākun B the third phase of Neolithic occupation in the Marv Dašt. This dispute could only be solved through new stratigraphic investigations at the respective sites, a task taken up by Abbas Alizadeh of the Oriental Institute Chicago, at the request of the Persepolis Research Foundation, in spring 2004<sup>46</sup>.

Soundings and excavations were undertaken in five sites, namely Tappe Jari A and B, Tappe Muški and Tal-e Bākun A and B. These works seem to have revealed major discrepancies between the cultural sequence, as it is preserved on the sites, on the one hand, and in the published sequences, on the other. The new investigations allow the redefining of the Neolithic cultural development of Fars now on the basis of stratigraphical observations, with Bākun B1 being the oldest, the

buff painted Jari B material defining the second phase, the third phase being the painted Muški material and finally Bākun B2 defining the fourth stage. At Tappe Muški proper, the lowermost levels revealed a transitional assemblage consisting of the soft straw tempered Jari B fabric painted with Muški patterns. All excavated sites revealed evidence for domestic features such as ovens, bins and fireplaces, and occasional structures of mudbrick or pisé, but due to the extreme limitation of the excavated areas, no coherent architectural plans could be noticed and reported.

**The Mamasani Archaeological Project/Fars:** (see also below, Chalcolithic-Early Bronze Age)

**Tol-e Baši/Fars:** By permission of ICAR, a second project investigating the early Neolithic of Fars was carried out by Kamyar Abdi, Dartmouth College, and Reinhard Bernbeck and Susan Pollock from Binghamton University at Tol-e Baši. This small mound is located in Marv Dašt on the western side of the Kor River<sup>47</sup>. One short season in 2003 allowed the investigation of five trenches on the western slope of the mound that had previously been partly cut by a bulldozer leveling agricultural land. Architectural remains were few and most features consisted of surfaces and floor levels as well as associated fire places and ovens. It could not be decided whether they refer to a permanent settlement, whether they are related to seasonal occupation of the area, or whether they represent an open air or off-site unit. A variety of samples that should give evidence on subsistence and livelihood are currently under analysis. Pottery consists of Muški and Jari (B) but both apparently occurred together, thus providing no further clues on the problem of sequencing the Marv Dašt Neolithic.

**Darre-ye Bolāġi site 73/Fars:** During the Joint Iranian-German rescue excavations in Darre-ye Bolāġi (see below, Chalcolithic to EBA), a layer with Jari-related pottery but no building structures was uncovered. This was below a layer of natural gravel an ancient landslide underneath the Bākun layers that caused by sealed all the older occupation traces.

**Češme ‘Ali/Tehrān:** The eponymous site Tappe Češme ‘Ali is today a badly damaged ruin surrounded by modern houses, the town Rey which now forms part of the Iran’s growing capital Tehrān. The excavations that had been conducted there during the 1930’s by Erich Schmidt

<sup>46</sup> For a narrative, including the major results, cp. A. Alizadeh 2004. The following summary is based on this report.

<sup>47</sup> Abdi et al. 2003; Abdi 2005 (1384).



have served as a basis for defining the Later Neolithic period of the central part of the Iranian Plateau. However, the prehistoric material was never properly published<sup>48</sup>. Azarmidokht Esfandiāri from ICAR has recently restudied the material from the old excavations that had been kept in Tehrān<sup>49</sup>. Her analysis allows the distinction of four major phases (I–IV), whereby phase I can be correlated to Zāḡe and Sialk I<sup>50</sup>, and phases II–IV define Češme ‘Ali proper.

In relation to the transformation of the Češme ‘Ali neighborhood into a public park, Hassan Fazeli from the University of Tehrān carried out a section cleaning in 1997. He was able to obtain material for absolute dating, which now attests an occupation of Češme ‘Ali largely throughout the first half of the fifth millennium B.C.<sup>51</sup>

**Tappe Pardis/Tehrān:** Tappe Pardis is a prehistoric mound in the area of Varāmin township that has suffered considerable damage from construction work during the last years. Rescue excavations carried out under the direction of Hassan Fazeli Nashli from the University of Tehrān revealed several kilns structures (**Fig. 8**) dating to the Češme ‘Ali period.

**Tappe Ozbaki/Tehrān:** In the vicinity of an abounding spring next to the village Ozbaki in Savojbolaḡ district, a cluster of nine smaller and one major settlement mound were found, representing seven millennia of human occupation. Each of these smaller mounds was later labeled with a distinguished name. Between 1998 and 2002, Youssef Majidzadeh excavated several of these mounds in the name of ICAR<sup>52</sup>.

The earliest remains of the Neolithic period were uncovered in Yan Tappe, about 700 m from the high mound. Five architectural levels could be distinguished, constructed from hand-formed mudbricks. Rooms were generally very small and did not exceed 2.5–3.5 square meters. One building had walls and floors covered with red ochre and an L-shaped platform. Burials were found under the floor of the buildings. The pottery assemblages allow comparisons with Sialk I and II, respectively Early Plateau A and B (early) in the terminology used by Majidzadeh<sup>53</sup>. The following



**Fig. 8**  
Tappe Pardis, view of trench with kilns, Češme ‘Ali period (photograph courtesy H. Fazeli Nashli).

period, the later part of Early Plateau B/or Češme ‘Ali, witnesses the shifting of the settlement to another small mound, Ĵeyrān Tappe, at 300 meter distance. The occupation of new spaces is also attested at Mārāl Tappe and Došān Tappe where later Češme ‘Ali material is found.

Stratigraphically overlaying the Early Plateau B layers, layers defined by the occurrence of “Plum Ware” seem to exist at Mārāl Tappe, and also in the lowermost strata of the high mound that have been observed at the base of a step trench running from the top of the high mound until five meters below the plain level<sup>54</sup>.

**Qomrud Survey and Excavations/Qom:** Between 1988 and 1993 and by permission of ICAR, Mir Abedin Kaboli undertook a survey of the valley of the Qomrud river<sup>55</sup>. During these five years, 93 archaeological sites were registered, for the most part dating to the Islamic period, but also including two Palaeolithic, six Neolithic and fifteen Chalcolithic places. Settlement continuity is extremely low, with only three Neolithic sites being occupied during the following Chalcolithic period. As is the case with many other areas in Central Iran, Bronze Age sites are almost not represented among the registered sites.

<sup>48</sup> Matney 1995 for a summary of the older reports.

<sup>49</sup> Esfandiari 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi 1977.

<sup>51</sup> Fazeli et al. 2002; Fazeli et al. 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Majidzadeh 1998–1999; Majidzadeh 2000; Majidzadeh 2001; two extensive excavation reports, the second with an English summary, have appeared so far (Majidzadeh 2003; Majidzadeh no year (c. 2000)).

<sup>53</sup> Majidzadeh 1976.

<sup>54</sup> The existence of a “Plum Ware Phase” has been postulated by Majidzadeh himself on the basis of observations from Tappe Gabrestan (Majidzadeh 1976), and a separate phase with “Plum Ware” is also described (Majidzadeh 2003) for the high mound of Tappe Ozbaki. However, a “Plum Ware Phase” was never observed as a separate unit anywhere else on the Iranian plateau so far.

<sup>55</sup> Kaboli 1997c; Kaboli 2000, with emphasis on the Prehistoric periods.



**Fig. 9**  
Tappe Sialk North  
mound, section  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Malek Shahmirzadi).



**Fig. 10**  
Arisman survey,  
Tappe Mesi,  
Neolithic pottery  
assemblage (photo-  
graph B. Helwing).

In relation to the survey, Kaboli carried out excavations at the major prehistoric site in the area, Qara Tappe Qomrud<sup>56</sup>. He was able to uncover a sequence of domestic architecture, constructed from pisé walls. The pottery assemblages collected from these houses is mostly red, with dark/brown or black paint, relating clearly to the well-known Češme 'Ali ware or the Sialk II material<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Kaboli 1997a.

<sup>57</sup> In fall 2000, Dr. Kaboli most kindly invited one of the authors to visit the site and see the pottery collection. While his published report only provides references to Sialk III, the materials shown seem to comprise mostly pottery of Češme 'Ali or Sialk II style.

**Tappe Sialk/Esfahan:** In 2001, ICAR has launched a five year program to secure and re-investigate Tappe Sialk and its environs. This "Sialk Reconsideration Project (SRP)" under the direction of Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi has since grown into an interdisciplinary research project that contributed important new observations on all cultural periods previously defined at Sialk (Sialk I–VI)<sup>58</sup>.

The Neolithic period (Sialk I–II) had been described by Ghirshman based on his excavations in three trenches dug in the North Mound of Sialk. In 2003, the SRP began to cut back parts of the southern section of Ghirshman's trench 1 in the centre of the North Mound (**Fig. 9**), in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the stratigraphy. Within the only 2 square meters excavated during this work, two burials were found. One of those skeletons had two copper studs next to the lower mandible that must, most probably, have been part of a body decoration originally piercing the lip or cheek. The base of the trench has not yet been reached, but a brief report of the upper layers is available<sup>59</sup>.

**Tappe Šūrābe/Esfahān:** The team of the "Sialk Reconsideration Project of ICAR" under the direction of Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi conducted surface surveys in the vicinity of Tappe Sialk. One of the most important discoveries is the Neolithic site Tappe Šūrābe<sup>60</sup>, located about 5 km southeast of Tappe Sialk, in the Karkas mountains' foothills area. The surface pottery collection consisted of coarse handmade and chaff-tempered wares with red paint and seems to predate the beginning of the Sialk Neolithic sequence.

**Arismān Survey/Esfahān:** During one season of survey carried out in relation to the Joint Iranian – German excavations at Arismān (see below, Chalcolithic)<sup>61</sup> that allowed the registration of 38 sites altogether, a group of four small Neolithic mounds, located at about 1–2 km from each other along a small stream, were recorded. Two of these sites with monochrome pottery and a flake industry seem to correlate with Tappe Šūrābe in the vicinity of Tappe Sialk. A third site yielded only few pottery fragments that seem to

<sup>58</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi has adopted the policy to publish a preliminary report every year. So far, four volumes containing contributions by excavators and specialists have appeared (Malek Shahmirzadi 2002b; Malek Shahmirzadi 2003a; Shahmirzadeh 2004; Shahmirzadi 2005). See below, for later periods.

<sup>59</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi 2004.

<sup>60</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi 2003b.

<sup>61</sup> Chegini/Helwing in prep.



belong to a tradition of biconical vessels such as those known from Fars<sup>62</sup> and an outstanding microbladelet industry (**Fig. 10**). The fourth site is contemporary to Sialk II. This pattern seems to illustrate the continuous shifting of settlements along the stream.

**Tappe Deh Keir/Semnān:** Tappe Deh Keir is one of several Neolithic sites found during intensive surveying in the Šāhrud vicinities by Hassan Rezvani<sup>63</sup> and Kourosh Roustae from ICAR. The site is located less than 5 km from Tappe Sang-e Čakmaq<sup>64</sup>, the famous Neolithic site that was excavated by a Japanese team in the 1960's–70's but never properly published. It can thus be hoped that these new investigations will help to fill this grievous gap. Tappe Deh Keir rises 2.5 m above the surface of the surrounding plain. A stratigraphic sounding dug by Rezvani revealed a considerable sequence of Neolithic layers (**Fig. 11**) including the “aceramic” phase defined by the Japanese team, followed by materials comparable to Češme 'Ali.

**Arg-e Dašt C/Gilān:** The Neolithic site of Arg-e Dašt C (**Fig. 12**) is the first Neolithic site ever recorded in the Gilān province. The credits go to the Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān (see below, Iron Age section) who discovered a scatter of pottery and stone tools on a terrace. The pottery assemblage contains some handmade ware with red paint, comparable with the material known from Sang-e Čakmaq<sup>65</sup>.

**Aq Tappe/Golestān:** By permission of ICAR, one season of rescue excavations at Aq Tappe (**Fig. 13**), located in the Greater Gorgān Plain, was carried out in 2000 by Sadegh Malek Shahmirzadi from the University of Tehrān<sup>66</sup>. Five trenches were dug, a large one on the summit of the mound and four smaller soundings on the edges of the mound. These allowed the definition of the site boundaries and the establishment of three major cultural periods, distinguished according to architectural layers that were built from pisé in the lowermost phase and from hand-shaped mudbricks in the two later phases. The oldest occupation dates to the Neolithic or Archaic Plateau Phase, with pottery of Zāge type. The second and third belong to the Later Neolithic, showing



**Fig. 11**  
Deh Keir, Neolithic building layer (photograph courtesy K. Roustae).

many affinities with Češme 'Ali ware (Old Plateau Phase) (**Fig. 14**). The latest cultural remains belong to an Iron Age graveyard.

**Golestān Park survey:** Systematic surface surveying has recently been initiated in the forest-covered area of the Golestān National Park. Hamid Omrani Rekavandi<sup>67</sup> from the Golestān office of ICHTO reports the finding of the Neolithic site Tappe Ārmādlu (**Fig. 15–17**) as the first Neolithic site in the forest area, and four more sites with a Neolithic occupation.

**Fig. 12**  
Arg-e Dašt C, Neolithic site (photograph courtesy of Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān, H. Fahimi).



<sup>67</sup> Reported during lecture of Hamid Omrani Rekavandi, 09. 11. 2005, Gorgān.

<sup>62</sup> Bernbeck et al. 2006.

<sup>63</sup> Rezvani 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Masuda 1972; Masuda 1973; Masuda 1974; Masuda 1976.

<sup>65</sup> A site description and the pottery is published in the fourth preliminary report of the Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilan, Ohtsu et al. 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi/Nokandeh 2001 (1379).



**Fig. 13**  
Aq Tappe, view from  
the West (photograph  
courtesy S. Malek  
Shahmirzadi).



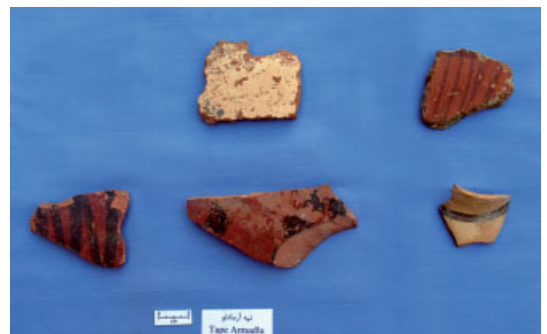
**Fig. 14**  
Aq Tappe, level III,  
pottery of Češme  
'Ali type (photograph  
courtesy S. Malek  
Shahmirzadi).



**Fig. 15**  
Golestān National Park Survey, Neolithic pottery from Tappe  
Latte (photograph courtesy H. Omrani).



**Fig. 16**  
Golestān National Park Survey, Neolithic site Tappe Āmārdlu (photograph courtesy H. Omrani).



**Fig. 17**  
Golestān National Park Survey, Neolithic pottery from Tappe  
Āmārdlu (photograph courtesy H. Omrani).



**Komišān Cave/Māzandarān:** The material collected from the Komišān cave looting pit (see above, Epipalaeolithic) represents a mixed assemblage that includes Neolithic sickle blades<sup>68</sup>. Inside the cave, Neolithic and later pottery fragments were collected as well. The assemblage covers a sequence comparable to Hotu and Kamarband Caves<sup>69</sup>. Mahforuzi<sup>70</sup>, thereby following Coon<sup>71</sup>, assigns the Neolithic material to the aceramic Neolithic.

### New answers to old questions – recent research on the Neolithic in Iran

The discovery of considerable Epipalaeolithic assemblages on the central part of the Iranian Plateau has important consequences for the understanding of the transition from the Epipalaeolithic to the Neolithic period. Older opinions that central Iran was not occupied at all during the late pleistocene<sup>72</sup>, must now be replaced by a perspective that allows for continuity in the cultural development also in the highlands. This new view is corroborated by taxonomic studies of the lithic assemblages in the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic sites, according to which the early holocene groups on the plateaus form part of a larger technocomplex that is found from the Caucasus until the Turkmen steppe, and that may have included the Iranian plateau<sup>73</sup>. With this new perspective, it is now necessary to search for transitional forms of artifacts and modes of life. One would for example expect that sedentary hunter – gatherer or fisher sites as they are well known for the Levantine Natufian to PPN, should have existed but have not (yet) been found.

The following period, the Pottery Neolithic, is comparatively well researched in the southwestern Zagros mountains and the adjacent lowlands. In Central and Northern Iran the situation is different. That we still lack crucial information, and that possibly still complete periods are elusive in the Neolithic chart of Iran becomes evident from the discovery of sites representing formerly unknown Pottery Neolithic assemblages, such as they are reported from Tappe Šūrābe and

from the Arismān survey. Even for the so far best researched area in highland Iran, Fars, we still lack basic chronological data. In this regard, programs aiming at establishing an absolute chronology such as the Jari/Muški re-study project, and the systematic analysis of stratigraphically controlled radiocarbon samples from key-sites from Central Iran will prove extremely helpful.

Other zones where early sites are so far under-represented are, for example, the forest-covered hills of Golestān, Māzandarān, and Gilān where now the first Neolithic sites have been recorded. This indicates that further primary data are urgently needed before far-reaching questions can be considered on a reasonable basis of evidence.

One of these far-reaching questions regards the early Neolithic in Northern Iran. Data from the Caspian Sea cave sites<sup>74</sup> in Iran and Turkmenistan<sup>75</sup>, and from Tappe Sang-e Čakmaq<sup>76</sup> on the northeastern edge of the high plateau, seemed for a long time to indicate the existence of an aceramic Neolithic phase in this region. It is equally possible, however, that these rather are sites that imply a functional or seasonal specialization, and may thus not represent the complete cultural set of the early Neolithic. If so, their definition as “aceramic” may be misleading. Such a trajectory seems now to be the preferred interpretation for the early Neolithic in Turkmenistan, where a considerable non- to semi-sedentary population may have existed in the early Neolithic<sup>77</sup>. New fieldwork, such as the Tappe Deh Keir excavations, may contribute significant new information to answer these questions.

### Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C.)

**Bāruj Tappe/East Āzarbāijān:** The large multi-period settlement mound Bāruj Tappe (**Fig. 18**) near Marand in East Āzarbāijān originally recorded by W. Kleiss under the name of “Tepe Parpar”<sup>78</sup>. A detailed surface sampling was carried out by Karim Alizadeh from ICAR during the

<sup>68</sup> Ghasidian 2004 (1382).

<sup>69</sup> Coon 1951; Coon 1952.

<sup>70</sup> Mahforuzi 2004 (1382), 267.

<sup>71</sup> Coon 1952.

<sup>72</sup> The alleged void on the plateau was usually explained by environmental conditions (see for example Mellaart 1975, 180), but it is now clear that this apparent void is due to a lack of research rather than an archaeological reality.

<sup>73</sup> Kozłowski 1996, 161 with a list of sites; Aurenche/Kozłowski 1999, 21 fig. 4; shown with a clear-cut boundary excluding the Iranian plateau in Kozłowski/Aurenche 2005, 88 map 0.29.

<sup>74</sup> Coon 1952.

<sup>75</sup> Markov 1966b; Markov 1966a; Markov 1981; for an English summary on the current status of research in Turkmenistan, see Coolidge 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Masuda 1972; Masuda 1973; Masuda 1974; Masuda 1976.

<sup>77</sup> Coolidge 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Kroll 1984, 19 “MD 5. Tepe Parpar 8 km westlich von Marand”; also quoted by Edwards 1986, 68, as a site of considerable quantities of EB IVB black-on-red ware; we thank Karim Alizadeh, ICAR, for help with these identifications.



**Fig. 18**  
Tappe Bāruj  
(photograph courtesy  
K. Alizadeh).

years 2001–2002<sup>79</sup>. As formerly identified, the bulk of pottery belongs to the Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age periods, with close resemblances both to sites in the Urmia basin and in Transcaucasia. Occupation continues until the Late Bronze Age, although the pottery sample is much smaller<sup>80</sup>.

**The Islāmābād Plain Project – Čoḡā Gāvāne and Tuwa Koške/Kermānšāh:** From 1998 onwards, a team led by Kamyar Abdi in the name of ICAR undertook a regional study in the plain of Islām-Ābād-e ġarb west of Kermānšāh, in a high plain along the course of the river Kerend<sup>81</sup>. Nineteen settlement mounds of Neolithic to Chalcolithic date are found in this landscape, and additionally, flat open sites and small mounded sites were observed that may represent seasonal occupations.

The project was aimed at defining a prehistoric settlement history for the area. Indeed, a shift from dispersed small Neolithic settlements towards a hierarchical settlement system could be observed for the middle Chalcolithic period, with the 3 ha settlement mound of Čoḡā Gāvāne forming

the regional center. Test excavations at Čoḡā Gāvāne<sup>82</sup> revealed Chalcolithic cultural layers with a find assemblage uniting materials of diverse origin, indicating that Čoḡā Gāvāne may have served not only as the local center but also as a knot within a larger exchange system.

A closer investigation of the small site Tuwa Koške, located within a secluded small valley pocket, revealed evidence for seasonal occupation during the middle Chalcolithic. Excavations uncovered some structures such as floor pavements constructed from pebble layers without the use of mortar, and straight stone boulder alignments that originally surrounded the tents. Find materials consist of limited lithic and ceramic assemblages. Faunal remains consist largely of ovicaprids, with a minor component of wild game. Although the results are still preliminary, there are good reasons to interpret the site as a seasonal camp used by transhumant herders in the summer<sup>83</sup>.

**Bān Āsiāb/Kermānšāh:** A middle Chalcolithic lithic workshop was detected accidentally in the Māhi Dašt during construction work. Members of the Islāmābād Plain Project visited the site and collected a lithic assemblage from the surface<sup>84</sup> that allowed the reconstruction of a sequence of large blade production. It is assumed that these blades were traded with contemporary communities in Māhi Dašt.

**Tappe Do Sar and Tappe Baladiye/Kūzestān:** One season of fieldwork was carried out by Abbas Alizadeh of the Oriental Institute Chicago in cooperation with Ali Mahforuzi for ICAR in Kūzestān<sup>85</sup>, concentrating on two sites that were originally documented during the Khuzestan Plain Survey under the numbers KS 004 (Tappe Do Sar) and KS 108 (Tappe Baladiye). They are located about 10 km southwest of Čoḡā Miš, and had yielded surface collections indicating an occupation from the Early Susiana (KS 004), respectively Middle Susiana period (KS 108) onwards. Both sites were first mapped and surface material was collected in a systematic manner, and then excavated according to the distribution of surface material.

<sup>79</sup> K. Alizadeh/Azarnoush 2002–2003; K. Alizadeh/Azarnoush 2003.

<sup>80</sup> Drawing on experiences from excavated sites with Kura Araxes and related materials, it seems that the early 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. produced immense amounts of pottery. At Arslantepe in Eastern Anatolia, undisturbed excavated Middle Bronze Age features can yield up to 80% EBA pottery, compare Di Nocera 1998, 75.

<sup>81</sup> Abdi 1999; Abdi 1999–2000; Abdi 2000; Abdi 2001a; Abdi et al. 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, the team could not proceed with large scale excavations at the site as had originally been intended (pers. comm. Kamyar Abdi).

<sup>83</sup> Kamyar Abdi has developed this interpretation further as part of his Ph.D. thesis (Abdi 2002).

<sup>84</sup> Bernbeck et al. 2004 (1382).

<sup>85</sup> A. Alizadeh/Mahfrozzi 2005.



**Map 3**

Iran Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age sites. 1 Bāruj Tappe. 2 Čoḡā Gāvāne and Tuwā Koške. 3 Bān Āsiāb. 4 Tappe Do Sar and Tappe Baladiye. 5 Tol-e Nurābād and Tol-e Spid. 6 Tal-e Malyān. 7 Rahmatābād. 8 Darre-ye Bolāḡi sites 73, 91, 119 and 131. 9 Tappe Ozbaki. 10 Tappe Ma'morin. 11 Tappe Qoli Darviš. 12 Tappe Sialk. 13 Arisman. 14 Šahdād. 15 Jiroft. 16 Bampur. 17 Šahr-e Sukte.

Tappe Baladiye was chosen on the assumption that it could provide information on the so far poorly understood early and middle protoliterate period that seemed to be easily accessible on a lower terrace, apparently the left-over of long-term agricultural levelling. Three test trenches dug there revealed almost no structural remains but only compacted clayey soil and reached virgin soil several meters above the current plain level. The fourth trench, located next to one of the soundings just described, held fragmentary residues of architecture and floors, but again soon touched virgin soil. A second operation was a stratigraphic trench cut into the northern slope that was equally not inclusive.

At Tappe Do Sar, excavation areas were chosen on the steepest part of the mound. Several trenches and later additional small soundings were opened that provided some unexpected results. Remains of two large superimposed mudbrick platforms were uncovered, the lower one dating to the Late Susiana 1, the upper one to Late Susiana 2 period. Both consisted of massive mudbrick; for the upper one a mudbrick format of  $44 \times 22 \times 10$  cm is reported. The upper platform must have extended for at least  $50 \times 50$  m. Alizadeh compares the platform with the well-known Susa platform, but refrains from drawing further conclusions at this preliminary state of investigation.

**The Mamasani Archaeological Project/Fars:** In a joint effort between a team from ICAR led by Kourosh Roustae and from the University of Sydney, led by Dan Potts, a systematic surveying and excavation project targeting the district of Mamasani in western Fars has been carried out with three seasons of fieldwork since 2001<sup>86</sup>. Work concentrated in the vicinity of Nurābād and in the Dašt-e Rostam-e yek 15 km farther to the northeast. Excavations were carried out at two large multi period settlement mounds, Tol-e Nurābād and at Tol-e Spid.

Tol-e Nurābād is a large settlement mound located on the outskirts of Nurābād. The steep slopes have apparently been trimmed deliberately, and at the base of the standing mound, earlier settlement layers still exist at the current plain level. Two trenches were excavated, one sounding on top of the mound in its northern part that revealed Middle Elamite layers and residues of later, Achaemenid or post-Achaemenid material. The second trench was a step trench of 2 m width cut into the northeastern side of the mound. A 15 m deep sequence of cultural layers was exposed there. At the base, early Neolithic, Muški-related material was recorded but no solid architectural contexts. This is followed by 5 m of cultural layers with local Neolithic material, some of it polychrome painted pottery. These Neolithic levels also yielded some architectural remains, constructed from pisé and from cigar-shaped bricks. Above this, Bakun-related pottery is recorded, then late Lapui and some Baneš. On top lay masses of Kaftari material.

The second large settlement mound was Tol-e Spid, at the center of the Dašt-e Rostam-e Yek northeast of Nurābād. This site has suffered much damage from deliberate bulldozing, and remains now as a 16 m high pinnacle with an expanse of 50 × 50 m. A step trench was cut into the northeastern face of the mound and allowed the identification of Chalcolithic and Bronze Age levels. Virgin soil had not yet been reached at the time of reporting.

The earliest recorded material belongs to the Lapui phase, dated to the early 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. The following phases provide a detailed development of Lapui, with assemblages dominated at the beginning by orange buff ware and coarse ware, while Lapui red slipped ware and buff ware only occur later. Most interesting is the existence of a Lapui-Baneš transitional phase, characterized

by a continuation of Lapui wares which can now bear a purple paint, and by the occurrence of beveled rim bowls. This material, radiocarbon-dated to around 3300 B.C., seems to represent the often missing transition to the Protoelamite period. The next levels belong to the classical Baneš period, and after that, the site was abandoned temporarily only to be resettled in the Kaftari period<sup>87</sup>. On top of the sequence, a Middle Elamite mudbrick package is documented that still stands 1.5 m high. The mudbricks of this platform contained older pottery from the Neolithic to the Kaftari period. Whether this structure relates in any way to the mudbrick with the name of Šilhāk-Inšušinak<sup>88</sup> recorded by Herzfeld remains uncertain. The remainder of the upper levels are Achaemenid to post-Achaemenid in date.

**Tal-e Malyān/Fars:** In 1999, a first step towards describing the actual status of the ruins of the Elamite capital Anšan, Tal-e Malyān in Fars, was undertaken<sup>89</sup>. Kamyar Abdi with a team from ICAR scouted the area and arranged first measures towards a better safeguarding of the site. A second season of work at the site, now with Kamyar Abdi and John Alden from the University of Michigan, took place only in fall 2004<sup>90</sup>.

During the 1999 season, a recently bulldozed part of the city wall was cleaned and a test trench excavated below that until the water table was reached. It was possible to distinguish several building stages of the city wall, and to gain better insight into the system of construction and brick-laying. Apparently, the later city wall belongs to the Kaftari period, while the older one may go back to the Late Baneš phase. Below the wall, the deep sounding yielded layers of domestic debris extending over the Baneš sequence. Older Lapui material could not be collected in a meaningful context; however, it is possible that such layers exist below the water table. Another sounding in YRB yielded evidence for the existence of a massive mudbrick construction in that part of the site.

During the 2004 season, three different operations were carried out. Firstly, the 1999 operation YRB was continued and expanded in order to reveal more evidence about the nature of the massive mudbrick construction that still cannot be dated. In the GHI area, excavated in order to uncover architectural remains of the Kaftari period,

<sup>86</sup> We would like to thank Cameron Petrie, now at the University of Oxford, for giving us a detailed summary of the work of the Mamasani Project. A full report is in preparation (Potts/Roustae in press).

<sup>87</sup> The pottery from these Kaftari levels at Tol-e Spid is published within an article dealing with the wider context and distribution of Kaftari material (Petrie et al. 2005).

<sup>88</sup> Petrie et al. in Potts/Roustae in press.

<sup>89</sup> Abdi 2001b.

<sup>90</sup> Alden et al. 2005.



the attempt failed and revealed instead a deposit of garbage containing material of the Kaftāri – Qal'e transition that had been deposited there sometime later in the 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C. and that is not connected to any architectural structure. Sounding H1 aimed at the recovery of materials dating to the Bāneš – Kaftāri transition from a formerly known Kaftāri garbage area. John Alden interprets the assemblage recovered there as an indicator for strong continuity between the proto-Elamite and the Elamite occupation of Malyān.

**Rahmatābād/Fars:** The settlement mound of Rahmatābād in the Polvar Valley is located c. 5 km below the future Sivand Dam. Since the site is threatened by the enlargement of the Esfāhān-Širāz highway, Hassan Fazeli from Tehrān University in cooperation with Reinhard Bernbeck and Susan Pollock from Binghamton University carried out rescue excavations in 2005. The site was apparently occupied during the Neolithic period as is attested by Muški pottery without context in the lower levels. The main occupation, however, dates to the Gap phase of the Bākun period. Several pottery kilns were found (Fig. 19; 20), so Rahmatābād may have been a specialized pottery workshop.

**Darre-ye Bolāgi sites 73, 91, 119 and 131/Fars:** Rescue excavations carried out in cooperation between ICAR and the German Archaeological Institute under the direction of Mojgan Seyedin and Barbara Helwing in the future flooding zone of the Sivand Dam concentrated on sites with Chalcolithic material. During the first season in 2005, two sites that had been recorded as Bākun period sites during the preliminary survey work of ICAR<sup>91</sup> were investigated. The larger site 91 yielded two pottery kilns (Fig. 21) that were partly disturbed and leveled by a later, post-Achaemenid occupation. The ceramic produced and fired there belongs to the Middle Bākun or Gap period (Fig. 22). The pottery apparently represents coherent kiln charges and no settlement material since no domestic contexts were observed.

Site 119 was equally occupied in post-Achaemenid times, and the older levels yielded no coherent contexts. The Chalcolithic pottery belongs to the classic or late Bākun period.

During the second season, following intensive geophysical mapping, a third pottery kiln was uncovered at site 91. More importantly, however, was the discovery of further Bākun period sites in Darre-ye Bolāgi. Site 73, originally registered as an Achaemenid site, turned out to be a major



**Fig. 19**  
Tappe Rahmatābād,  
Bākun period kilns  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Fazeli Nashli).



**Fig. 20**  
Tappe Rahmatābād,  
Bākun period pottery  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Fazeli Nashli).



**Fig. 21**  
Darre-ye Bolāgi,  
site 91, pottery kiln  
of Middle Bākun  
period (photograph  
Joint Iranian-German  
mission to Darre-ye  
Bolāgi).

<sup>91</sup> Ata'i 2005.



**Fig. 22**

Darre-ye Bolāgi,  
site 91, Middle Bākun  
pottery (photograph  
Joint Iranian-German  
mission to Darre-ye  
Bolāgi).

**Fig. 23**

Darre-ye Bolāgi,  
site 73, pottery kilns  
of Late Bākun period  
(photograph Joint  
Iranian-German  
mission to Darre-ye  
Bolāgi).

**Fig. 24**

Darre-ye Bolāgi,  
site 73, burial of Late  
Bākun period (photo-  
graph Joint Iranian-  
German mission to  
Darre-ye Bolāgi).

pottery production site during the late Bākun period. Five pottery kilns (**Fig. 23**), all of the two-chambered type with keyhole-shaped layout, similar to the ones known from the type site Tal-e Bākun A, were uncovered. These were apparently dug into older settlement layers, since a round stone alignment was discovered below one of the kilns. A hocker burial found in the vicinity of another kiln (**Fig. 24**) also belongs to the older settlement layers.

Site 131 was found in the centre of the small plain after intensive geoarchaeological surveying, and represents the remainder of a bulldozed ancient settlement mound, most probably the one reported by Aurel Stein on the occasion of his travel from Pasargadae to Persepolis. Cultural layers still exist to a depth of 3 meters below the level of the plain. No standing architecture was observed, although pits with organic fill, fireplaces and surfaces exist. Single and multiple burials (**Fig. 25; 26**) were embedded in the settlement layers. Additionally, one two-chambered pottery kiln was uncovered.

Two sites from historical periods currently under excavation<sup>92</sup> also yielded Bākun material but were not further investigated. Darre-ye Bolāgi seems to have been a densely occupied small settlement cluster during the Bākun period, and it is highly likely that some functional differentiation between these sites will become apparent if further studies are undertaken.

**Tappe Ozbaki/Tehrān:** Chalcolithic remains have been registered during Youssef Majidzadeh's excavations in the name of ICAR at Tappe Ozbaki (see above, Neolithic section) within the step trench sequence from the high mound, but no architectural features were observed within the limited excavated space. At close-by Maral Tappe, a mudbrick platform was found, in association with some beveled rim bowls.

The Sialk IV period is represented by a few pithos burials covered with a bowl, comparable to the graves defining subphase 2 of Sialk IV at the type site and occurring also in Arisman. One numerical tablet found in a sounding (trench C) close to the high mound is noteworthy<sup>93</sup>.

No settlement remains of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. are attested, but they must have existed in the

<sup>92</sup> Site 64, a Sassanid settlement under study by a Joint Iranian-Polish team from ICAR and the University of Warsaw led by Ali Asadi and Barbara Kaim, yielded Bākun pottery without context. Site 76, a site dating to the Achaemenid and later periods under excavation by the Iranian-Italian Mission directed by Ali Reza Asgari from the Shiraz office of ICHTO and by Pierfrancesco Callieri from the University of Bologna, overlies a layer with Bākun pottery.

<sup>93</sup> Majidzadeh no year (c. 2000), fig. 14.

neighborhood, since some pottery comparable with Giyān and Sagzābād has been collected in the step trench.

**Tehrān Plain Survey/Tehrān:** Since 1997, Hasan Fazeli from Tehrān University in cooperation with Robin Coningham from Bradford University has carried out surface collection for sampling purposes<sup>94</sup> on prehistoric settlement mounds in the Tehrān environs. Since 2003, soundings in selected sites have been carried out as well in order to obtain stratified type assemblages. Lithic materials and pottery were subject to various scientific analyses in order to determine raw material procuring and processing technology. According to Fazeli, technological specialization can serve as a marker for social complexity, and the results of analyses carried out on materials from these collections are consequently used to describe a growing degree of complexity for the Chalcolithic sites in the Tehrān vicinity.

The proximity to the capital has, however, some rather threatening implications. The surveying team noticed considerable damage inflicted to about 90% of the registered sites<sup>95</sup>, making more intensive surveying and especially the registration and protection of monuments all the more urgent.

**Qazvin Plain/Qazvin:** In 1998 and from 2001 onwards, the plain of Qazvin was added to the interest sphere of Hasan Fazeli's surveying team. Surveys were conducted in the plain of Qazvin and several soundings dug at the formerly excavated sites Tappe Zaġe<sup>96</sup>, Tappe Qabrestān and Tappe Isma'ilābād in order to obtain dating samples. Among the material retrieved from the later two sites are dark gray burnished sherds that seem to belong to the Early Transcaucasian complex<sup>97</sup>. The sampling allowed the establishment of a partly revised chronological sequence for the Neolithic and Chalcolithic period in the western part of the Iranian Plateau<sup>98</sup>. Fazeli uses this sequence to advocate strong local components in the development of Chalcolithic communities on the region that would have come to a sudden halt towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C., possibly due to the impact of the Kura Araxes culture<sup>99</sup>.



**Fig. 25**  
Darre-ye Bolāġi, site 131, multiple burial 115 of Late Bākun period (photograph Joint Iranian-German mission to Darre-ye Bolāġi).

**Tappe Ma'morin/Tehrān:** See below, Iron Age section.

**Tappe Qoli Darviš/Qom:** A full sequence of Chalcolithic (Sialk III) to Bronze Age layers was recorded by Siamak Sarlak from ICAR and his team in a deep sounding (**Fig. 27**) at Tappe Qoli Darviš/Qom<sup>100</sup>. These Sialk III-/Chalcolithic layers yielded beveled rim bowls besides painted pottery, comparable to the material from Tappe Sialk. The following Early Bronze Age is represented by a thin layer with dark burnished pottery, according to Siamak Sarlak a variety of Kura Araxes-/Yanik-/Godin IV material (**Fig. 28**).

**Fig. 26**  
Darre-ye Bolāġi, site 131, pottery assemblage associated with multiple burial 115 of Late Bākun period (photograph Joint Iranian-German mission to Darre-ye Bolāġi).



<sup>100</sup> For details, see below, Iron Age section; Sarlak/Aqhili 2005 (1384).

<sup>94</sup> Fazeli et al. 2001; Fazeli et al. 2002; Coningham et al. 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Coningham et al. 2004, 10.

<sup>96</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi 1977; Negahban 1977.

<sup>97</sup> Fazeli Nashli/Ajarlou 2005 (1384).

<sup>98</sup> For data on the revised chronology, see Fazeli et al. 2004; Fazeli et al. 2005; Fazeli Nashli/Abbasnezhad Sereshti 2005; Fazeli Nashli 2005 (1384).

<sup>99</sup> Fazeli Nashli/Ajarlou 2005 (1384).





**Fig. 27**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
step trench  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Sarlak).



**Fig. 28**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
pottery of ETC type  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Sarlak).

This would make Qoli Darviš the easternmost site so far with Kura Araxes related material. The Middle and Late Bronze Ages are equally present, characterized by grey pottery with knob decoration, and by a specific red-slipped ware. Above this follow layers of the Iron Age I–II. Most important is the identification of Bronze Age layers that indicate a settlement continuity here, while most other places in the western regions of the Iranian Plateau, like Tappe Sialk, lack cultural layers of this period.

**Tappe Sialk/Esfahān:** One of the first endeavors of the “Sialk Reconsideration Project (SRP)” directed by Sadegh Malek Shamirzadi for ICAR was to check the results of Ghirshman’s 1930’s excavations by cutting back a 2 m wide part of the section in trench 1 of the South Mound<sup>101</sup>. 12.5 meters of cultural layers of the Sialk III and IV period could be distinguished in 39 strata. Virgin soil was reached about 8 m above the level of the surrounding plain. Based on the observations from this cut-back section, investigations of the summit immediately north of trench 1 were initiated in 2004, aiming at the detailed documentation of the Sialk III–IV transitional levels<sup>102</sup>.

A large-scale excavation was then begun in squares M/N 30–31 of the South Mound<sup>103</sup>. Attention had been drawn to this area, partly covered by an old backdirt heap, since copper slag was visible eroding at the edge of the mound. Excavation allowed the identification of fire places possibly linked to copper working, and a large amount of copper slag as well as litharge. Comparable materials dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. had been documented before on a large scale in the prehistoric craftsmens’ settlement at Arismān, only 60 km from Tappe Sialk. The findings from Sialk now establish that Arismān was not just one isolated centre of copper working, but rather one among several such places along the southern fringe of the Dašt-e Kavir.

Older levels of the Sialk III period were identified on the southern side of the South Mound<sup>104</sup>. Squares K/L/M 11–12 revealed residues of domestic architecture and an extended storage area, identified through large storage jars found scattered on the floor<sup>105</sup>. Several burials observed inside the rooms are not interpreted as regular burials but as casualties caused by the collapse of the roof.

**Arismān/Esfahān:** The first archaeological excavations with foreign participation after more than 20 years began in 2000 in the prehistoric metal-smiths’ settlement Arismān, located 60 km south-east of Kāšān and Tappe Sialk. The site is contemporary to the late Sialk III and the Sialk IV/Proto-Elamite period. This work is part of the interdisciplinary research project “Ancient Mining and Metallurgy on the Central Iranian Plateau”,

<sup>101</sup> Nokandeh 2002.

<sup>102</sup> No sound Sialk IV levels have yet been reached since massive Iron Age architecture covered the relevant area, see below, section Iron Age.

<sup>103</sup> Nokandeh/Fahimi 2003 (1382).

<sup>104</sup> Nokandeh 2003 (1382).

<sup>105</sup> Helwing/Nokandeh 2004.



carried out as a Joint Project between ICHTO, the Geological Survey of Iran, the German Archaeological Institute, the German Mining Museum and the Technical University Freiberg. Four seasons of excavation under the direction of Nāser Chegini and later Hamid Fahimi from ICAR, and Hermann Parzinger and Barbara Helwing from DAI, and one preliminary survey season have by now allowed the gain of important new insights into technical processes and internal organization of a specialized craftsmens' settlement<sup>106</sup>.

The site extends over more than one square kilometer and has been shifting over time, leaving no mound structures but extended areas with single phase cultural remains. Two major occupation phases can be distinguished at a distance of 500 m from each other, the older dating to the late Sialk III period (mid 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C.), the later one to the Sialk IV period (c. 3000 B.C.).

The oldest excavated occupational phase consists of a house with pisé walls and a hearth. Later, this part of the site was turned into a specialized potters' quarter, yielding residues of five potters' kilns (Fig. 29). A debris layer covering the potters' kilns yielded residues not only of misfired pottery but also large amounts of metallurgical waste from copper and silver processing (Fig. 30). Three contemporary smelting sites were also recorded during the survey in the Arismān *hinterland*, all located on the immediate fringe of the desert. This is important in so far as it demonstrates that Arismān is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a standard case of 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. copper producing centres.

Two huge slagheaps of the following Sialk IV period were investigated, revealing remains of one smelting furnace (Fig. 31). Investigations of the contemporary settlement area allowed the documentation of a full scale urban layout settlement. Inside the houses, pit furnaces for the melting and casting of copper artifacts were distinguished. Casting moulds and furnace fragments indicated that all these secondary copper processing activities took place inside the settlement. The final usage of the area was that as a graveyard of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. (Fig. 32).

The analysis of the find assemblage allows the firm placement of the site into a larger framework of early specialized settlements during the mid 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. that functioned as raw material suppliers to communities in the lowlands of Khuzestan during the Middle Uruk period. This affiliation soon shifted in favor of a south – eastern con-



**Fig. 29**  
Arismān, area B, kiln of Sialk III period, mid 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. (photograph Project "Ancient Mining and Metallurgy on the Western Iranian Plateau").

nection, with Arisman clearly being part of a larger network of Proto-Elamite towns with closest links to Tal-e Malyān in Fars<sup>107</sup>.

**Šahdād/Kermān:** Mir Abedin Kaboli's Archaeological Mission to the Dašt-e Lut, conducted in the name of ICAR and the Kermān office of ICHTO, has steadily proceeded with excavations in the town of Šahdād over the last years<sup>108</sup>, investigating various areas of the town. The combined results allow now a more comprehensive picture of this oasis town that was formerly mainly famous for its extended graveyards<sup>109</sup>.

Kaboli's team was able to clear the remains of a large free-standing building complex. According to the domestic installations within the building, he distinguishes four units within this complex,



**Fig. 30**  
Arismān, metallurgical finds (photograph Project "Ancient Mining and Metallurgy on the Western Iranian Plateau").

<sup>106</sup> Chegini et al. 2000; Chegini et al. 2004. Fahimi/Helwing 2006. An extensive report on the results of the first five years of work is in preparation (Chegini et al. in prep.).

<sup>107</sup> Helwing 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Short reports were published on the domestic quarter (Kaboli 1996; Kaboli 1997b).

<sup>109</sup> Hakemi 1997.



**Fig. 31**  
Arismān, area A,  
smelting furnace  
of the Proto-Elamite  
period (photograph  
Project "Ancient  
Mining and Metallurgy  
on the Western Iranian  
Plateau").

possibly residences of members of an extended family household. Each such unit had a large vaulted hearth and several containers installed in a kitchen area. The pottery assemblage from this complex contains some band-painted ware, relating to the highland variety of the Proto-Elamite culture. Other brown-on-buff painted material links the site to the earliest layers at Šahr-e Sukte. Noteworthy is a stone stamp seal with two image sides. Another part of the settlement area forms the so-called "farmer's complex". Here, again, a large free-standing building complex was exposed. Workshop areas existed inside the houses. Adjacent to the house were ancient ploughing traces, indicating that in ancient times this farmer's complex was probably surrounded by a well-kept garden.

**Fig. 32**  
Arismān, area C,  
burial, late Proto-  
Elamite period (photo-  
graph Project "Ancient  
Mining and Metallurgy  
on the Western Iranian  
Plateau").



As a rule, occupation in Šahdād is single-phased and apparently shifts with time. Evidence for irrigated horticulture exists, and one should probably imagine the old town of Šahdād as a true oasis town surrounded by lush gardens, quite the opposite of the present impression of this desert site.

Excavations in the graveyards also continued over the years. Richly furnished Early Bronze Age tombs keep yielding find assemblages that contain objects from various corners of the then known world, including etched beads from the Indus valley and soft stone vessels similar to the Jiroft material.

**Jiroft/Kermān:** The fabulous finds from the pillaged graveyards in the Halilrud Valley south of Kerman, around the town Jiroft, were presented to an awed international archaeological audience on the occasion of the "First International Conference on Relations between Iran and Western Asia (FICIWA)" in August 2003 in Tehrān. With these new finds<sup>110</sup>, a formerly almost unknown cultural region has begun to gain contours that had long been assumed to exist but had not been found yet.

A number of large settlement mounds and several extended Bronze Age cemeteries exist in the Halilrud valley south of Kermān. Illegal excavations in these graveyards began in the late 1990's, and soon sophisticated soft stone vessels that would be classified as "transelamite" or "intercultural style" in the traditional terminology began to appear on the international arts' market. Hamideh Chubak from ICAR, who at that time was in charge of excavating in the Sassanian – Early Islamic city Daqianus next to Jiroft, conducted one season of rescue excavation in one of these graveyards (Riganbār) in 2002. In the meantime, Jiroft police were able to retrieve several hundred soft stone artifacts from these looted tombs. ICAR then decided to conduct a major research program and entrusted Yousef Majidzadeh with this task, who decided to concentrate first on excavating two neighboring settlement sites instead of following up the graveyard lootings<sup>111</sup>. He is joined in his efforts by

<sup>110</sup> Majidzadeh 2003a; Majidzadeh 2003b; Majidzadeh 2003c: the objects presented in this catalogue have been confiscated by the police and are now on display in the newly opened Archaeological Museum of Jiroft.

<sup>111</sup> A pedagogic decision aimed at proving to the local population that there is "nothing valuable" to be found in the settlement mounds, so that further plundering of the Jiroft sites would appear less attractive (pers. comm. Y. Majidzadeh). This view has been criticized by O. Muscarella (2005, 177) who regrets that in this way no reliable grave inventory for the area can be documented.



specialists from CNRS Paris and from the University of Pennsylvania. An additional surveying program is run by ICAR and the local Kermān office of ICHTO in the Halilrud valley.

The two settlement mounds under excavation are Konār Sandal North (A) and Konār Sandal South (B), 28 km south of Jiroft town, and situated 2 km from each other.

The older site is Konār Sandal South. A step trench cut into the eastern flank of the high mound, and several large-scale surface shavings on the western slope revealed that the larger part of the high mound consisted of a mudbrick massif. This construction seals older settlement layers that extend far beyond the limits of the high mound. Domestic architecture with workshop areas – multiple room buildings with large open air working zones – have been uncovered both north and south of the high mound, indicating that the settlement originally was much larger. According to geophysical investigations, it is expected that these older layers will reach about 12 m below the current level of the alluvial plain.

One room on the high mound contained about 500 different stone pebbles and boulders. These seem to represent a raw material stock collected from the river beds, containing various colorful rock varieties that were also used for the production of stone artifacts at the site.

A workshop area at the western base of the site stands out for having yielded a fair amount of charcoal and several seal impressions with elaborate images that form the basis for the definition of a “Halilrud style”, as Holly Pittman from Pennsylvania University calls it. Associated pottery includes various wares known in 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. southeastern Iran and in the Makrān/Pakistan. The lithic assemblage closely resembles the material known from Sahr-e Sukte, including the leaf-shaped harpoons that are so characteristic there.

A large mudbrick platform was also constructed on top of Konār Sandal North, the later of the two sites dating mostly to the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. Since excavation so far has mostly concentrated on the platform, evidence on other architecture and find assemblages is still limited there. The function of these huge mudbrick platforms is still elusive. It is possible that a stepped building structure depicted on several of the chlorite vessels refers to these platforms<sup>112</sup>, but further interpretation should await more complete evidence.



**Fig. 33**  
Bampur, step trench  
(photograph courtesy  
M. Sajjadi).

**Bampur/Kermān:** In order to investigate the extension of this site that forms one of the stratigraphical cornerstones for southeastern Iran during the Bronze Age<sup>113</sup>, Mansour Sajjadi carried out a program in the name of ICAR, cutting soundings and a long step trench (**Fig. 33**) at the castle's base in 2004<sup>114</sup>. His preliminary results reveal that the prehistoric sequence is indeed restricted to a small area in the western part of the

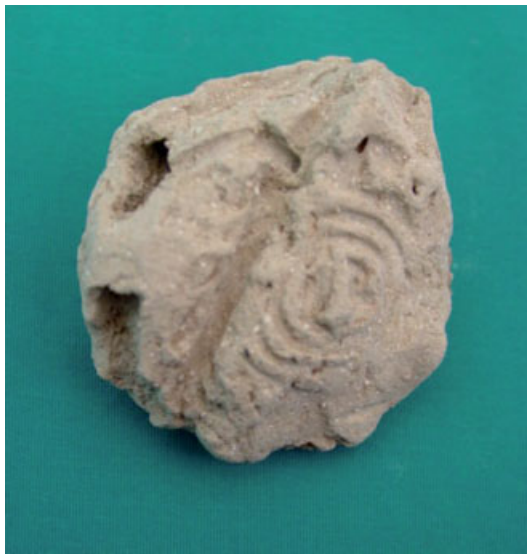
<sup>112</sup> Vallat 2003.

<sup>113</sup> De Cardi 1970. – For a discussion of the old sequence with regard to more recent findings, see Potts 2003.

<sup>114</sup> Sajjadi 2003b; Sajjadi 2004, 249–250; Sajjadi 2005.



**Fig. 34**  
Šahr-e Sukte, seal  
impression (photo-  
graph courtesy  
M. Sajjadi).



**Fig. 35**  
Šahr-e Sukte,  
lapis lazuli bead with  
gold foil wrapping from  
a burial (photograph  
courtesy M. Sajjadi).



site, with the major part of the site either covered by Islamic layers or disturbed by recent graveyards.

**Šahr-e Sukte/Sistān:** Excavations at the “Burnt City”, Šahr-e Sukte in Sistān, have been resumed since 1997 under the direction of Mansour Sajjadi for ICAR<sup>115</sup>. Research concentrated on four major areas: The cemetery in the southwestern part of the site, a craftsmens’quarter and the so-called “monumental area” in the north, and a domestic quarter in the northeastern part of the site, north of the older Italian trenches.

This 150 ha large ruin once must have been surrounded by water on three sides, in a landscape totally different from the vast desert that forms the site’s environment today:

More than 350 graves have so far been uncovered in the cemetery area<sup>116</sup>, whereby graves of all four occupation phases of the site occur together in close vicinity, or occasionally the later graves even cut into the older one. Some of these graves contained rich funerary gifts, comprising varieties of beads made from semi-precious stones, vessels from pottery, alabaster and copper, and other singular pieces (**Fig. 34; 35**). Burials are mostly in an exceptional good state of preservation due to a salt crust that formed above the graves and enhanced preservation of bones and especially of organic material. The most common grave type are shaft graves that were dug through a thick layer of conglomerate. Their actual burial chamber was hollowed out underneath the conglomerate layer and later closed by constructing a mudbrick wall in front of the concavity. Tombs with a true cover, that is, with a vaulted upper construction, exist as well and are mostly used for multiple burials. Bodies were usually placed in a contracted position, wrapped in a mat or a textile, and were accompanied by various burial gifts, especially large collections of pottery vessels, beads of lapis lazuli and carnelian and various types of seals. Anthropological study of the skeletal material revealed evidence for some clear pathological stages, and one example of survived trepanation<sup>117</sup>.

The “monumental area”<sup>118</sup> whose excavation began in 1999 was constructed as a large-scale architectural ensemble during phase II (2800–2500 B.C.), although some traces of earlier (later phase I) occupation are recorded. So far, 90 coherent room units were uncovered. The find material consists of seals and seal impressions, counting devices and all kinds of packing material (mats, textiles, ropes and jars), indicating that at least in part of the building apparently goods were packed for transport and sale, indicating a fairly complex administration at the site. The building underwent several remodeling phases, at the end of which the central part of the area rose about 4 m and a revetment encased all older constructions. The final occupation that followed after a short period of abandonment dates to phase III and is a squatter occupation with workshops.

<sup>115</sup> Mansour Sajjadi has published a variety of brochures with plenty of illustrations on the site (Sajjadi 2003 (1382)-b; Sajjadi 2003 (1382)-a; Sajjadi 2004 (1383)), as well as several reports on the ongoing work (Sajjadi/Foruzanfar 2001; Sajjadi 2001 (1379); Sajjadi 2003a; Sajjadi et al. 2003).

<sup>116</sup> The first part (1997–2000) is published (Sajjadi et al. 2003).

<sup>117</sup> Sajjadi 2003a.

<sup>118</sup> Sajjadi 2004, 247–248.

Another workshop area is located at the northern end of the site, where large burnt areas and platforms were exposed during one first season. The fourth excavation area is a domestic quarter north of the former Italian trenches, where densely arranged architecture, bordering on a street, was uncovered.

The extraordinary preservation of organic material at Šahr-e Sukte provides ideal conditions for carrying out specific research programs on textile, basketry, wooden artifacts, charcoal and botanical macro remains<sup>119</sup>. Wood species used for various artifacts were determined, and in addition to charcoal remains attest the existence of nine tree species, indicating more favorable environmental conditions in antiquity. Regarding subsistence, an extensive garden cultivation added to the usual diet of wheat, barley and millet by providing fruits and grapes.

### The first urban civilizations – Late Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age

The 5<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. can be characterized as a period of increasing social complexity, with the development of specialized industries and the establishment of long distance trade contacts. This long-established fact has, however, gained even more importance since recent research has revealed new evidence on the strong local dynamics behind this process<sup>120</sup>.

While the Late Neolithic was characterized by fairly large sedentary villages situated in environmentally favorable locations, the following Chalcolithic seems to have developed new and innovative living strategies. As the data from the Qomrud and Arismān survey demonstrate, the degree of settlement continuity between both periods is low and most settlements of the Sialk III period are newly founded, such as the Tappe Sialk South Mound. The same pattern is evident in southern Iran, where the Bākun period brings a wealth of newly founded sites. From the beginning of the Chalcolithic in the 5<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C., however, there is evidence for a specialization in handicrafts, attested, for instance, in pottery kilns such as have been excavated in Tappe Sialk, period III,<sup>121</sup> and Tal-e Bākun A<sup>122</sup>, as well as recently in Tappe Rahmatābād and in the Darre-ye Bolāgi Bākun sites. This large-scale pottery pro-

duction links the cultural development in Iran with the Mesopotamian Ubaid, where equally large pottery production sites have been documented<sup>123</sup>.

Besides pottery production on a larger scale, systematic experiments with new materials, especially with copper and silver, seem to have taken place during the Chalcolithic. During the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C., copper melting and the casting of artifacts is documented in individual buildings of the settlements<sup>124</sup> but also in small independent sites. Individual smelting places scattered on the edge of the desert were recorded during the Arismān survey that do not seem to be associated with any permanent settlement. The extraction of silver from lead is regularly practiced in the larger sites and is attested now at Arismān and at Tappe Sialk. This developing metal industry must be understood within the framework of a growing supra-regional network: artifacts produced in the highland sites were distributed to Susa and other lowland sites. Trade contacts between the lowlands and the 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. communities in the highlands is reflected *vice versa* in the distribution of specific pottery types that are thought to originate in the Uruk culture, such as nose lug jars, spouted jars and beveled rim bowls that appear regularly in Sialk III assemblages. They do not, however, appear as separate assemblages alongside indigenous ones, such as has been described for the Godin VI/V complex<sup>125</sup>, but are part of the regular pottery inventory, and most probably of local production.

Towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C., human communities begin to concentrate in settlements of urban scale. Proto-Elamite settlements of considerable extension, with all aspects of a centralized administration, such as Tal-e Malyān and Tappe Yahyā, appear in the highland plains in southern Iran, and urban scale sites occur in oasis locations around the great deserts, Dašt-e Kavir and Dašt-e Lut. Along the desert, some of these settlements such as Šahdād and Arisman

<sup>119</sup> A first report on the new botanical research program is available (Costantini et al. 2004).

<sup>120</sup> For a general discussion, see Helwing 2004 (1382); Matthews/Fazeli 2004; Helwing 2005.

<sup>121</sup> Ghirshman 1938.

<sup>122</sup> Langsdorff/McCown 1942.

<sup>123</sup> For example at Tall Abada (Jasim 1989), Tall Kosak Šamali (Nishiaki/Matsutani 2003), and many others; for an overview on prehistoric pottery kilns in Western Asia, see A. Ali-zadeh 1985; Hansen Streily 2000; Boroffka/Becker 2004.

<sup>124</sup> This period is represented in the material found at Tappe Qabrestān, contemporary to Sialk III, 4–5 (Majidzadeh 1979).

<sup>125</sup> Thirty years ago, carried by the overall enthusiasm following the discovery of Uruk sites outside the heartland and within the then predominant centre-periphery dogma, a "Susa merchants' outpost" was postulated for Godin Tappe (Weiss/Cuyler Young 1975). The material has still not been published but seems to cover a larger timespan, parallel to the Middle and the Late Uruk period (Helwing in press; Rothman 2006).

reach a considerable horizontal extension but do not form a true mound. A reason for this may be that these sites represent shifting settlements. Other, more favorable locations with a steady water supply saw the establishment of urban scale sites and the formation of settlement mounds, among them Tappe Hesār, Tappe Sialk IV and Šahr-e Sukte. Although these circum-desert sites share many aspects of craft organization, their cultural affiliation varies according to their geographical position: along the southern desert fringe, Sialk and Arisman clearly follow traditions of pottery manufacture similar to the Proto-Elamite centres emerging in highland South Iran<sup>126</sup>. The eastern sites such as Šahr-e Sukte share considerable aspects of material culture with South Turkmenistan oasis settlements. And along the northern edge of the desert, Tappe Hesār equally shows strong links with sites in the Turkmen steppes. All of these sites, however, share a common understanding on the organization of trade. They administer the flow of raw materials and goods using various types of seals, and by noting quantities on Proto-Elamite tablets.

Over the course of the early 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. these centres further specialize in multiple craft activities, relying on local raw material supplies. Large-scale copper and silver production took place along the southern desert rim, where Arisman now provides an instructive example of an industrial scale metalsmiths' settlement. The processing of lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian and the production of beads from various semi-precious stones was one of the central craft activities at Šahr-e Sukte and Tappe Hesār. Slightly later, around the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C., follows the establishing of other specialized industries, such as the cutting of soft stone vessels at Tappe Yahyā and Jiroft, of copper smelting and bead and alabaster vessel production at Šahr-e Sukte and Šahdād. These craft activities reach a scale fit to provide not only local markets but to cater to distant consumers. A regular trade of semi-finished raw material blocks and of artifacts is established between these centers, and during the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C., products of Iranian workshops circulate all over the Near East, marking what Pierre Amiet has once termed the "Age of Exchange"<sup>127</sup>.

While this has long been recognized as a general pattern, the discovery of the Jiroft area sites and especially the subsequent excavations at Konār Sandal A and B now allow the definition of a completely new cultural koiné as one of the

major players in that 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. supra-regional exchange. During a recent conference at Jiroft<sup>128</sup>, the participants agreed upon the definition of the major characteristics of this "Jiroft" or "Halilrud culture", advocating at the same time that expressions such as "transelamite" or "intercultural style", which have been in use for several decades due to the lack of better definitions, should not be used any more in the future.

This Halilrud culture can be described as a river-bound culture with extensive settlements and large graveyards. One characteristic of the architecture is that settlements consist of free-standing multiple room buildings that served both as workshops and for domestic purposes. Apparently, a major part of daily life took place outside the houses, as can be suggested from the distribution of tools and containers outside. A so far incomprehensible phenomenon is the existence of large mudbrick terraces in the two excavated sites, Konār Sandal A and B. The pottery assemblages associated with the houses comprises different wares, closely related especially to material known from southern Pakistan and from the Makrān. Within the larger Iranian world, relations with the southern and eastern desert fringe are clearly discernible. Not only can the lithic assemblage of Konār Sandal A be easily compared to Šahr-e Sukte, but soft stone vessels also occur in the Šahdād graveyards, and a game board with the depiction of a snake has recently been found in a grave in Šahr-e Sukte<sup>129</sup>. The Halilrud population buried their dead in graveyards outside the settlements, preferably on slightly elevated river terraces. Numerous gifts seem to have accompanied these burials, and it is mostly from the confiscated soft stone vessels allegedly originating from these tombs that we gain insight into a rich and unparalleled imagery prevalent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. Halilrud valley<sup>130</sup>. The seal impressions and seals excavated at Konār Sandal B enable us to confirm the attribution of these images to the Halilrud culture, and it can be hoped that continuing excavation in the future will provide a more secure basis for further interpretation and comparison.

The trajectory towards urbanization that is so clearly visible in the circum-desert sites is not re-

<sup>126</sup> Helwing 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Amiet 1986.

<sup>128</sup> Hamāyeš-e šenākt va mo'arefi-ye tamadon-e hoze-ye Halil Rud, Jiroft, Kermān, 31. 1.–3. 2. 2005.

<sup>129</sup> Sajjadi 2003a, 13 fig. 4–6.

<sup>130</sup> Severe criticism has been raised against using only the confiscated material as a basis for such a definition (Muscarella 2005), who rightly challenges the genuity of several (but not all) of the confiscated objects. Regarding the dating of the material, a mid 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. date seems to hold despite claims for an older date; see Amiet 2004 for a discussion of the dating.



flected, however, in the western part of the highlands. In Āzarbāijān, the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. brings an occupation characterized by settlements with round buildings and black polished handmade potteries related to the Kura-Araxes material from the southern Caucasus area. The easternmost extension of the material, for which Yānik Tappe is the type site, has formerly been recorded at Godin Tappe IV<sup>131</sup>. Recently, however, black polished ware has also been found in the Qazvin plain<sup>132</sup> and in various parts of Central Iran in Qoli Darviš, and even in the forest zones in Gilān<sup>133</sup>, thereby extending the distribution of this Kura-Araxes-related material far beyond their formerly known limits.

### Middle and Late Bronze Age and Iron Age

**Haft Tappe/Kuzestān:** Extensive geomagnetic surveying carried out at Haft Tappe under the direction of Behzad Mofidi Nasrabadi from the University of Mainz allowed the distinction of larger architectural contexts for the known middle Elamite graves and buildings<sup>134</sup> and to add corrections to the old plans of the site<sup>135</sup>. According to these, both terrace complexes (I and II) formed part of a cluster of large building units, each with a separate and probably brick paved courtyard.

**Čoḡā Zanbil/Kuzestān:** The UNESCO World Heritage site Čoḡā Zanbil, one of the main tourist attractions in Kuzestān, the undergone intensive restoration for several years in the framework of an international UNESCO sponsored project. In addition, since 1999 Behzad Mofidi Nasrabadi from the University of Mainz was able to proceed with a systematic settlement survey, geophysical investigation (**Fig. 36**) and excavation program both within the confines of the city walls and in the Čoḡā Zanbil *hinterlands* along the Karun river<sup>136</sup>. He identified densely settled habitation quarters inside the middle wall as well as in the



**Fig. 36**  
Čoḡā Zanbil, geophysical investigations  
(photograph courtesy  
B. Mofidi Nasrabadi).

southeastern part of the third, outer wall ring<sup>137</sup>, and established the existence of settlement in the outskirts of the city. Most importantly, the survey pottery collection allows a diachronic picture of the settlement development in and around Čoḡā Zanbil.

**Qal'e Geli Tappe/Čahār-Mahāl va Baḡtiāri:** A series of test soundings was carried out in 1996 by Ali Asghar Nowrouzi<sup>138</sup> from the local office of ICHTO in Čahār-Mahāl va Baḡtiāri in order to identify the extension of this large settlement mound, located in the Lordegān plain, just to the south of a small dam. The site had previously been surveyed and described by Alan Zagarell<sup>139</sup> as a site with Neolithic to Chalcolithic material, and 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C. occupation. The test soundings revealed a cultural sequence beginning with the middle Chalcolithic and continuing into the Islamic period. In one of the soundings, a brick with an inscription mentioning Huteluš Inšušināk (1120 B.C.) was found, proving the existence of Elamite public architecture. This is all the more important since the mountainous area of the Baḡtiāri mountains has usually been understood as remaining outside the Elamite hegemony.

### Iron Age

**Šahryeri-Meškinšahr/Ardabil:** The hilltop fortifications on two basalt summits above the Qara Su were first described during Charles Burney's

<sup>131</sup> Parzinger 2000; Rothman 2006. – For a recent summary on the status of knowledge in Iran proper, comp. Summers 2004, 617, who still draws the boundary of the eastern extension from Lake Urmia to Kangāvar.

<sup>132</sup> Fazeli Nashli/Ajorlou 2005 (1384).

<sup>133</sup> Fahimi, this volume.

<sup>134</sup> Negahban 1991.

<sup>135</sup> The results of these investigations have already been published in detail, see Mofidi Nasrabadi 2003/2004 a. A web-site illustrating the project is available at: <http://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/mofidi/Hafttape/lage.html>.

<sup>136</sup> For a detailed report, see Mofidi Nasrabadi 2003/2004 b. The site is displayed on the web at: <http://www.staff.uni-mainz.de/mofidi/choghazanbil/index.html>.

<sup>137</sup> For a map with the results of the geophysical survey, see Mofidi Nasrabadi 2004, 304 fig. 15.

<sup>138</sup> Nowrouzi 2003.

<sup>139</sup> Zagarell 1982, site L1, description p. 186.

**Map 4**

Iran Middle Bronze Age to Iron Age sites. 1 Haft Tappe. 2 Čoġā Zanbil. 3 Qal'e Geli Tappe. 4. Šahryeri-Meškinšahr. 5 Hasanlu. 6 Bukān (Tappe Qālāyči). 7 Tabriz – Masjed-e Kabud. 8 Qal'e Ziwiye. 9 Kul Tārike. 10 Tappe Sangtarāšan. 11 Sorġdom-e Laki. 12 Tappe Ozbaki. 13 Tappe Ma'morin. 14 Tappe Qoli Darviš. 15 Vešnave. 16 Sarm. 17 Šamširgāh. 18 Zar Bolaġ. 19 Vāsun-e Kahak. 20 Tappe Sialk. 21 Gandāb-e Ķarand. 22 Jamsīdābād. 23 West Sefīdrud. 24 Gohar Tappe. 25 Bāzgir. 26 Taleš graveyards, Tul.

Meškinšahr survey in 1978<sup>140</sup> as “site 56” or Ar-jag Qal'e. During this extensive work, the nature of the site as a fortified hilltop settlement site with an upper and a lower town in addition to the citadel was recognized, and the settlement was dated to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C., based on the existence of grey ware. Four groups of anthropomorphic stelae, and tombs inside and outside the settlement were also reported. The stelae had, at that time, been found arranged in

rows, standing side by side and all facing the same direction. They were considered to pre-date the settlement and were tentatively assigned to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. The larger fortification further on the northeastern ridge does not seem to be related to the hilltop settlement between the two fortifications and may have been a medieval construction, based on details of the architecture. The settlement proper revealed early Parthian pottery during the British survey.

Recently, work at the site that is now called Šahryeri was resumed under the direction of Ali Reza Hojabri Nowbari from Tarbiat Modarres Uni-

<sup>140</sup> Burney 1979; Ingraham/Summers 1979.





**Fig. 37**  
Sahryeri, general view  
of the site (photograph  
courtesy A. R. Hojabri  
Nowbari).

versity Tehrān. He engaged in clearing some of the tombs outside the settlement area. The tombs are mostly chamber tombs of considerable size, no doubt aimed at accommodating multiple burials. Some of the grave chambers are constructed in a rather opportunistic way, making use of niches in the bedrock and covered with irregular elongated basalt slabs. In one grave the walls consisted entirely of re-used stelae. The pottery associated with the graves comprises grey ware and red slipped ware, indicating a date in Iron Age II/III. The graves also yielded bronze weapons (**Fig. 40**).

By clearing an area below the saddle, Nobari was able until June 2004 to expose two long rows of anthropomorphic stelae facing each other, thereby forming a corridor of about 1.5 m width. In the following 2004 summer season he uncovered again more stelae, bringing the number to over 400 (**Fig. 37–39**)<sup>141</sup>.

Trenches have also been cut in two areas of the settlement, revealing dry stone house walls standing on flat areas that had been terraced into



**Fig. 38**  
Sahryeri, burial cist  
(photograph courtesy  
A. R. Hojabri  
Nowbari).

the bedrock. At the same time the leveled bedrock forms the house floors.

**Hasanlu/West Āzarbāijān:** During restoration work on the period IV architecture at Hasanlu, Hamid Khatib-Shahidi from Tarbiat Modarres University Tehrān carried out a sounding in front of the western gate (**Fig. 41**)<sup>142</sup>. Based on the stratigraphy recorded there he suggests a re-dating of Hasanlu IIIA to before 600 B.C.

<sup>141</sup> Pers. comm. A. R. Hojabri Nowbari, fall 2004; Dr. Nowbari will provide a detailed report on these findings in the next issue of AMIT.

<sup>142</sup> Khatib-Shahidi 2005 (1384), 80 fig.



**Fig. 39**  
Šahryeri, stelae  
(photograph courtesy  
A. R. Hojabri  
Nowbari).



**Fig. 40**  
Šahryeri, weapons  
from the burials  
(photograph courtesy  
A. R. Hojabri  
Nowbari).

**Bukān, Tappe Qālāyči/West Āzarbāidjān:** The extended mountain settlement Bukān/Tappe Qālāyči became known about 20 years ago, when numerous glazed tiles from illegal excavations appeared on the market. Surveying and excavation began in 1986, first under the direction of Esmail Yağmayi from ICAR and since 1988 under Bahman Kargar from the local office of ICHTO<sup>143</sup>. Tappe Qālāyči is a fortified town located in the mountains east of the 'Alīābād plain, 8 km of the modern town of Bukān. The major part is a fortified building complex to which belong areas of an outer town and cemeteries. Excavations have so far concentrated on the fortified building that is surrounded by a massive stone wall. Before its construction, the natural rock was partly leveled and steps were cut into the natural rock. Access to the complex could be gained via a gate that led into a courtyard in front of the real entrance. From there derives the upper part of a stela that was found, however, in a secondary, collapsed situation. It is also reported that the glazed tiles have been collected from the fill of that courtyard but unfortunately no fragments were detected in situ. The interior of the complex (**Fig. 42**) is organized around a large main courtyard, with magazine rooms in the northern part. In the southern part, one secluded room almost certainly is the cella within a religious context, closely recalling the cella arrangement in burnt building II in Hasanlu IVB. The glazed tiles (**Fig. 43**) combine elements of Assyrian and Urartian iconography in a unique way and are a particularly good example of the fusion of different styles that characterizes the late Iron Age in the Iranian highlands<sup>144</sup>. Similarly, the Aramaic inscription includes formulas known from inscriptions found in Northern Syria<sup>145</sup>, equally indicating the transmission of cultural traits to the highlands. Based on the inscription of the stela, the mountain fortress is now identified with the Mannean capital Izirtu<sup>146</sup>.

**Tabriz – Masjed-e Kabud/East Āzarbāidjān:**

The construction of a shopping mall in the immediate vicinity of the famous Blue Mosque (Masjed-e Kabud) in Tabriz led to the discovery of Iron Age tombs and settlement remains within the confines of the mosque's courtyard. Rescue excavations were begun in 1999 by Nosratolahe Mo'tamedi and proceed since 2000 under the

<sup>143</sup> Kargar 2005 (1384).

<sup>144</sup> For a discussion of the glazed tiles, see A. Mousavi 1994; Malekzadeh 1995.

<sup>145</sup> Fales 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Bashshash Kanzagh 1996 (1375); Lemaire 1998.



direction of Ali Reza Hojabri Nowbari<sup>147</sup> from Tarbiat Modarres University Tehrān. The construction project has since been redesigned to preserve part of the graveyard and there are plans to protect it as an open air museum under the supervision of the nearby Archaeological Museum.

More than 100 tombs (**Fig. 44; 45**) have been uncovered so far below 1 m of sterile soil and a thick level of architectural debris from the Medieval city. The Iron Age tombs can be divided into three major construction types: the largest group is simple pit graves with a stone slab cover, of round or rectangular shape. The second group is surrounded by pebble stone dry walls or mud-brick walls. The third type has a horse shoe-shaped enclosure. The tombs tend to be located in close proximity to each other and sometimes make use of one common separating wall. The dead bodies were all buried in a flexed position oriented along an East-West axis, mostly in single graves, and accompanied by a variety of pottery vessels, personal ornaments and weapons. Between the graves, larger pits with round dry stone enclosures were documented. Those are interpreted by the excavator as domestic installations for living purposes, as a sort of tent floor. It seems that these settlement remains postdate the graveyard but still belong to the Iron Age. A deer antler was found, hanging on one of the walls.

No scientific dating of the burials has yet been undertaken. The pottery assemblages consist largely of monochrome dark grey wares, some with incised decoration, or of buff wares, buff wares with red slip that can also have incised decoration, and buff wares with red painted geometric design. Bowls with a channeled rim and pitchers with short free-standing spout are common. Various types of bronze and iron projectiles, bracelets and finger- and armrings as well as pins with ribbed shaft and conical heads were found. A singular piece is a pin with a zoomorphic head. Comparisons for these materials can mostly be drawn with Hasanlu IV, although some types seem also to relate to Hasanlu V.

**Qal'e Ziwiye/Kordestān:** The name Ziwiye is largely known to western researchers as the assigned origin of a group of various splendid art objects confiscated in 1946 on the Tehrān arts' market<sup>148</sup> that combines various styles of art, of



**Fig. 41**  
Hasanlu, gate  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Khatibshahidi).

Uratian, Assyrian and especially Scythian origin, in a masterly way. Less well-known is the castle Qal'e Ziwiye that occupies the top of an elongated mountain spur, covering an area of roughly 500 × 800 m extension. At the base of the mountain, a contemporary graveyard is located. Illegal excavations inside the castle triggered an extensive excavation program by ICHTO that was begun in 1994 by Nosratolah Mo'tamedi who

**Fig. 42**  
Bukān, view of the  
fortified building and  
room 1 (photograph  
courtesy B. Kargar).



the castle from where more finds were collected. See Ghirshman 1979, pl. 20,1 for the location of these excavations in relation to the mountain top castle visible in the background. The thicket of controversy that followed the discovery (Ghirshman 1979, 9–10) will probably never be resolved. For a study of the ivories, see Mazzoni 1977.

<sup>147</sup> Hojabri Nowbari/Salehi Garusi 1384 (2005); Hojabri Nowbari 2005 (1384).

<sup>148</sup> Godard 1950; for the problem of consistency of the material, see Muscarella 1977. – Apparently, this discovery was followed by “commercial excavations” on a terrace below





**Fig. 43**  
Bukān, glazed tile  
(photograph courtesy  
B. Kargar).



**Fig. 44**  
Tabriz, Masjed-e  
Kabud, Iron Age burial  
(photograph courtesy  
A. R. Hojabri Nowbari).



**Fig. 45**  
Tabriz, Masjed-e  
Kabud, Iron Age burial  
(photograph courtesy  
A. R. Hojabri  
Nowbari).

cleared architectural remains inside the castle<sup>149</sup>. Since 1998 it is directed by Simin Lakpour from ICAR who also investigated the graveyard.

The outline of the castle<sup>150</sup> is clearly determined by the elongated and narrow shape provided by the summit plateau that was originally completely enclosed by massive mudbrick walls. Stone was also used as a construction material for floor pavements and occasionally for outside walls, but the standard material were mudbricks of 46 × 46 × 14 cm size. Access to the castle is possible only from the northeastern side via a gate and then a long stepped passage paved with irregular stone slabs. Both sides of this passage are lined with massive mudbrick walls still preserved to more than 2 m height. A second, two-chambered gate finally allows access to the inner part of the castle. This gate could be blocked by a wooden door of considerable size, as is evident from the huge door socket still preserved in situ. Adjoined on the northern side of the gate is a building block with six small cell-like rooms, possibly a magazine or storage room. Thirty meters farther west, a massive building consisting of four cells within massive mudbrick walls blocks the way at a right angle. This is part of another gateway that is attached to the northwestern wall of the main building. Only after two 90° – turns can this building be entered, via two narrow doorways. The main building is only partly preserved; the northern wall and the northwestern corner were lost due to erosion on the edge of the summit. The centerpiece of this main building consists of a large columned hall with two rows of limestone column bases preserved. The interior facade of this room is designed with regular niches and recesses and must originally have been painted. Indeed a small piece of wall painting was preserved, showing a bearded figure in an adoration or greeting gesture<sup>151</sup>. Glyptic material was rare and consisted only of stamp seals.

The pottery assemblage from the castle consists of buff ware, buff ware with geometric incisions and grey ware that the excavator compares to Godin II. Besides, a number of delicately painted polychrome fragments have been registered, clearly demonstrating a link with the well-known glazed Assyrian pottery.

Excavations in the cemetery by Simin Lakpour had uncovered 176 graves at the time of her last report. The find assemblages from these graves are varied, and some material – terracot-

<sup>149</sup> Mo'tamedi 1995; Mo'tamedi 1996.

<sup>150</sup> For a plan of the 1996 status of excavation, see Mo'tamedi 1997, 165 pl. 62.

<sup>151</sup> Mo'tamedi 1996, 356 figs. on top.

tas and bronzes – does indeed display Scythian influence. The assemblages also include shapes identical to the material uncovered 60 years ago, among them pear-shaped glazed Assyrian bottles and complex pin types. Standard samples of Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals occur within the cemetery assemblages. The whole complex can be firmly dated to Iron Age III.

**Kul Tārike cemetery/Kordestān:** Excavations in the Iron Age graveyard of Kul Tārike began in 2003 under the direction of Hassan Rezvani from the office of ICAR in Tehrān. The site is located in 2000 m asl on a mountain southeast of Bukān, in the direction of Ziwiye.

In contrast to many standard Iron Age graveyards, at Kul Tārike natural caves were used for the burial of the dead (**Fig. 46**). The caves were closed with huge stone slabs and eventually reopened for later burials, and multiple, successive burials occur regularly. The high elevation of the site might be an indicator for this graveyard being related to a transhumant group. The find assemblages closely resembles the material from the Ziwiye graveyard, with pear-shaped glazed bottles (**Fig. 47; 48**) and neo-Assyrian cylinder seals.

**Tappe Sangtarāšān/Lorestān:** Mehrdad Malekzadeh from ICAR documented a hoard of more than 350 bronze artifacts (**Fig. 49**) that had been found in a small hill named Tappe Sangtarāšān<sup>152</sup>, close to Kōramābād, and have been confiscated by the local police. The material comprises types characteristic for Iron Age II/III (**Fig. 50; 51**).

**Sorkdom-e Laki/Lorestān:** The mountain settlement of Sorkdom-e Laki is located immediately west of the provincial capital Kōramābād, about 10 km northwest of the mountain town of Sorkdom-e Luri that had been investigated in the 1930's by the Holmes Lorestān expedition<sup>153</sup>, and separated from this by the Kuh-e Čangāri. The site had previously also been visited by Louis Vanden Berghe.

The settlement area extends over a fair part of the slope that has been terraced for the purpose of settlement. Below the city lies a contemporary graveyard.

Illegal excavations in 1994 at Sorkdom-e Laki brought fragments of a Neo-Assyrian relief to light that shows two winged lions arranged heraldically to the two sides of a plant. An excavation pro-



**Fig. 46**  
Kul Tārike, Iron Age burial (photograph courtesy H. Rezvani).



**Fig. 47**  
Kul Tārike, Assyrian bottle from Iron Age burial (photograph courtesy H. Rezvani).

<sup>152</sup> Lecture by M. Malekzadeh, Tehrān 24. 05. 2006.

<sup>153</sup> Schmidt et al. 1989, 49–60. Since then, this site is often referred to only as Sorkhdum.





**Fig. 48**  
Kul Tārike, copper  
figurine from Iron Age  
burial (photograph  
courtesy H. Rezvani).

gram was then initiated, begun in 1998 by Nosratollah Mo'tamedi<sup>154</sup> and since 2000 under the direction of Arman Shishegar from ICAR.

The settlement area has been terraced regularly to provide space and ground for constructions. These have been erected from dry stone walls of approximately 1 m width. Trimmed stone slabs with holes serving to join wall parts were found albeit never in situ. The excavators suggest the reconstruction of the site as a seasonal settlement, with the constructions being merely enclosures inside which tents or shelters would have been set up temporarily. This argument is based on the observation that no debris material or collapsed walls existed and that the standing walls never exceed a height of more than 1 m. However, given the sheer size of the wall foundations and the existence of elaborate stone reliefs on the site, such an interpretation seems highly unlikely. It can be suggested that possibly the last period of usage relates indeed to a squatter occupation that would have followed, however, on a substantial settlement.

Find material collected during the regular excavations include one more fragment of stone relief comparable in style and workmanship to the one found before excavation. The pottery assemblage consists mostly of buff ware, with fugitive red or orange paint. Arman Shishegar compares the material to Nuš-i Jān, Godin III, Ziwiye and Bābā Jān and dates the complex to the end of Iron Age II and to Iron Age III.

**Fig. 49**  
Sangtarašan,  
find situation of  
copper hoard  
(photograph courtesy  
M. Malekzadeh).



<sup>154</sup> Mo'tamedi 1999.

**Tappe Ozbaki/Tehrān:** Tappe Ozbaki, excavated by Youssef Majidzadeh between 1998 and 2005 in the name of ICAR, must have been a major settlement from the beginning of the Iron Age onwards. Grey pottery, marker of this period, is found over an area of 2200 sq.m., including the small mound of Došān Tappe where architectural vestiges of this period have been uncovered. The high mound was also occupied during the earlier Iron Age. Extended graveyards of this period have been uncovered at Jeirān Tappe, yielding the usual grey ware and pattern burnished pottery of Iron Age II. With Iron Age III (or the Median period), the extension of pottery scatters shrinks and the settlement seems not to have exceeded 15–20 ha.

During this last period, the high mound was occupied by a large fortified building that was surrounded by a massive oval wall. Walls were still standing up to 3 meters high. The interior holds an architectural ensemble consisting of three long narrow rooms, possibly storage rooms; two large rectangular rooms, one with a stone column base and benches, a courtyard and a large rectangular room with niches and a central platform, possibly a shrine. The oval enclosure wall, the long storage rooms and the large rectangular rooms all closely recall the Tappe Nuš-i Jān fortress although that is constructed in a much more elaborate way, with buttressed facades and interior niches<sup>155</sup>.

Before the construction of this latest fortress, three earlier massive fortifications existed below the uppermost one. These must be partly contemporary with the Iron Age II occupation at Došān Tappe, and have been recorded according to the vestiges uncovered in the step trench. However, their full extension and layout cannot be revealed.

**Tappe Ma'morin/Tehrān:** During rescue excavations at the settlement mound Tappe Ma'morin, located within the confines of the future Tehrān International Airport, by Jafar Mehr Kian from ICAR in 1991 and 1995, three settlement layers and possibly pottery kilns associated with grey pottery of 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. affinity were uncovered<sup>156</sup>. A Mittani seal was found in association with the architectural layers. The investigations could not be completed.

<sup>155</sup> See Roaf/Stronach 1973, fig. 1; Stronach/Roaf 1978, fig. 1 for a plan.

<sup>156</sup> Mehr Kian 1996; Sarkhosh Curtis/Simpson 1997, 143; compare A. Mousavi 2001, 154–155 for a brief evaluation of the site.

**Tappe Qoli Darviš/Qom:** The roughly 100 ha settlement mound Tappe Qoli Darviš is one of the most important Iron Age settlement sites in the central part of the Iranian Plateau<sup>157</sup>. The site is located within the southern outskirts of the city of Qom, about 1 km east of the well-known Jam-kārān Mosque. Since the ground of the site is part of the mosque's property, ICHTO was not able to prevent major damage to the mound. Of the 20 m standing mound reported by Kleiss in 1983, only the lowermost 5 m of cultural layers are preserved. A road to the mosque has also been constructed, cutting straight East-West through the site. The preserved occupation sequence extends from the late Neolithic/Chalcolithic period to Iron Age II and is now confirmed by a stratigraphic sounding down to virgin soil<sup>158</sup>. However, a continuous occupation until the Seljuk period seems to have existed, as is evident from surface finds.

In 2003, ICHTO could begin with limited rescue excavations. After two seasons of excavation under the direction of Siamak Sarlak from the National Museum of Iran, there is now better evidence on the nature of the Iron Age occupation. Solid architectural layers (**Fig. 52**), consisting of walls constructed from quadrangular mudbricks, were uncovered. Some of these walls seem to have collapsed very suddenly, and Sarlak suggests that an earthquake may have led to the destruction of the Iron Age II settlement. Most important is the detection of a massive mudbrick platform<sup>159</sup>, preserved to a much lesser height than the well-known "grande construction" of Tappe Sialk but comparable otherwise. This structure was extensively decorated with painted bricks and other architectural decorative material (**Fig. 55**). Not surprisingly, the pottery assemblages can well be compared to the Tappe Sialk graveyards A and B (**Fig. 53; 54**).

**Vešnave/Qom:** Within the framework of the Joint Project on "Early Mining and Metallurgy in West Central Iran", prehistoric mines in the Āliābād mountains south of Qom, the vicinity of Vešnave (**Fig. 56**), were investigated in a cooperation between Thomas Stöllner from the German Mining Museum Bochum and Mahmud Mir Eskanderi and Kourosh Roustaei from ICAR<sup>160</sup>. A number



**Fig. 50**  
Sangtarašan, copper  
axe (photograph cour-  
tesy M. Malekzadeh).



**Fig. 51**  
Sangtarašan,  
copper vessel (photo-  
graph courtesy  
M. Malekzadeh).

of mines could be fully documented. These had apparently been exploited intensively during antiquity by means of "fire setting". This means that the rock was cracked by first heating it with a fire and then chilling it by pouring cold water over it<sup>161</sup>. The rock cracks in a characteristic way, leaving concave, shell-shaped hollows on the wall and ceiling of the mine. Apparently, this technique was used widely during the Bronze Age. Further dating evidence for the Vešnave mines is grey pottery with pastille decoration dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C.<sup>162</sup>, and various radiocarbon dates<sup>163</sup> ranging between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C. Vešnave may thus have been used systematically as a copper raw material supplier during these peri-

<sup>157</sup> The site is identical with the settlement mound "Djamgaran" that Wolfram Kleiss surveyed in the early 1980's (Kleiss 1983).

<sup>158</sup> Sarlak/Aqhili 2005 (1384), see right figure on p. 92 for a drawing of the profile, and p. 94 pl. 2 for a photograph of the actual sounding.

<sup>159</sup> Sarlak/Malekzadeh 1384 (2005).

<sup>160</sup> Stöllner et al. 2004 a.

<sup>161</sup> Weisgerber/Willies 2000.

<sup>162</sup> Stöllner et al. 2004 a, fig. 11.

<sup>163</sup> Stöllner et al. 2004 a, fig. 14.





**Fig. 52**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
Iron Age building and  
floor (photograph  
courtesy S. Sarlak).



**Fig. 53**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
Iron Age pottery  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Sarlak).

ods. Later, the caves occasionally served as temporary shelters, and one apparently was used as an offering place during the Sassanian period<sup>164</sup>.

<sup>164</sup> Stöllner/Mir Eskanderi 2003.

**Sarm cemetery/Qom:** The Iron Age graveyard of Sarm is located on a natural hill immediately to the east of the road from Qom to Kahak, about 1 km in a straight line from the Iron Age hilltop site Šamširgāh<sup>165</sup> and was probably the burial ground related to that very settlement<sup>166</sup>. Excavations under the direction of Khosrow Pourbakhshandeh from ICAR lasted from 2001 to 2003 and led to the discovery of 85 graves. Most of these graves<sup>167</sup> are simple inhumations with single burials. Occasionally, the tombs were lined with mudbricks. One single tomb consisted of a true mudbrick cist with a gabled roof made from flat stone slabs. In one case the body had been placed on a bed of mudbrick arranged in the shape of a T, respectively a cross, with more inhumations arranged around it. Only rarely, however, more than one individual was buried in the tombs, and these cases mostly apply to infants buried with an adult. One single case of three

<sup>165</sup> See below.

<sup>166</sup> Fahimi 2003.

<sup>167</sup> A description of the tomb types is provided by Sarlak 2004 (1382).

individuals, one infant with two adults, was recorded. Position and orientation of the burials reveals no regularity; extended and flexed burials occur in various orientations. Burial gifts consist mainly of grey ware vessels (**Fig. 57**). Among them are a few shapes that are also known from cemetery A in Sialk, such as bowls with three legs, vessels with basket handles, and short straight spouts. One remarkable find is an iron sword with a bronze handle. Such bi-metallic weapons are usually restricted to Iron Age II. Minor bronze artefacts are also among the usual material (**Fig. 58**). However, the largest amount of material belongs to a well-known Iron Age III repertory, with grey ware footed goblets and fluted beakers and bowls, and with beaked pitchers, sometimes with animal protomes, and a minor component of painted Sialk VI material.

**Šamširgāh/Qom:** This important hilltop fortress was first reported under the name Khowrabad to the archaeological public<sup>168</sup>, but is now under investigation under its local name Šamširgāh. The name refers to a mountain saddle between two rock ridges lining the southern edge of the Dasht-e Kavir (**Fig. 59**) with free view over the plain to the north, and accessible from the south only via one natural rock gate. Related to the fortress is a lower town extending in the fields to the south that has unfortunately suffered much from systematic looting over the last decades, so that Šamširgāh can be regarded as another important Iron Age town in line with Qoli Darviš and Sialk, a view that is confirmed by the finding of impressed mudbricks that may relate to monumental architecture comparable to those two sites<sup>169</sup>.

Hamid Fahimi from ICAR has engaged in a first season of systematic investigation<sup>170</sup>, beginning with topographical mapping and excavation of one trench in the center of the site (**Fig. 60**), in front of the natural entrance to the fortress. The topographical mapping allowed the documentation of visible architectural features such as the foundations of towers along the northern ridge of the mountain, and a row of rooms that had been set against bedrock along the northern edge of the fortress. In the excavated trench, a stone wall of 80 cm width forming the outer wall of one cor-



**Fig. 54**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
Bronze Age pottery  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Sariak).



**Fig. 55**  
Tappe Qoli Darviš,  
Iron Age stamped  
brick in situ  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Sariak).



**Fig. 56**  
Vešnāve, view of mining area Čale Gar (photograph courtesy T. Stöllner).

<sup>168</sup> Kleiss 1983.

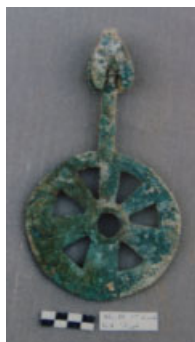
<sup>169</sup> During unsystematic surveying, M. Malekzadeh from ICAR also collected several stamp-impressed brick fragments comparable to the material from Sialk "grande construction" and Qoli Darviš (Malekzadeh 1384 (2005)). Unfortunately, at the time when systematic investigation began, none more were left on the site so that no identification of their original context is possible yet.

<sup>170</sup> Fahimi 2003; Fahimi in press.





**Fig. 57**  
Sarm cemetery,  
grey ware vessel from  
graveyard (photograph  
courtesy Kh. Pour-  
bakhshandeh).



**Fig. 58**  
Sarm cemetery,  
copper wheel from  
graveyard (photograph  
courtesy Kh. Pour-  
bakhshandeh).

ner of a building was documented that was covered, especially in the northern part, by debris and wall collapse. Three rooms inside the building were partly constrained within the limits of the trench. These rooms had a gypsum plaster floor, and in the corner of the southwestern corner of one room stood a pithos (**Fig. 61**) with a sickle (**Fig. 62**) inside. According to Fahimi, the pottery associated with this building is grey ware dating to Iron Age II. South of the building, two mudbrick walls were added to the large stone wall during a later building stage, forming another room with a mudbrick floor, and with an oven standing in front of the stone wall.

**Zar Bolağ/Qom:** A small rectangular building (**Fig. 63**), constructed from flat stone slabs and standing in an isolated position on a small hilltop west of the Tehrān-Qom highway, was subject to “commercial excavations” during the 1960’s. The site was visited in 2002 by Mehrdad Malekzadeh from ICAR, and a sketch map and a pottery sample collection were published, allowing the dating of the structure to the late Iron Age. Apparently, the structure had been deliberately abandoned. The interior was filled and the complete structure had then been endowed with a mudbrick lining. Malekzadeh draws comparisons to the well-known abandoned buildings at Tappe Nuš-i Jān.

**Vāsun-e Kahak/Qom:** A comparable rectangular stone building (**Fig. 64**) on top of a rock spur at Vāsun, constructed from flat broken stone slabs in dry wall technique, was registered in 2003 by Seyed Ahmad Mousavi in the name of the Qom

office of ICHTO. Drawing on this unpublished report, M. Malekzadeh from ICAR has recently visited this site as well<sup>171</sup>. As was the case in Zar Bolağ, the building had been deliberately filled and sealed before abandonment. The pottery sample allows a dating to the late Iron Age period.

**Tappe Sialk/Esfahān:** During the first year of the “Sialk Reconsideration Project of ICAR” under the direction of Sadegh Malek Shamirzadi, the “grande construction” (**Fig. 65**) dominating the South Mound of Sialk has been cleaned and partly mapped<sup>172</sup>. During this clearing process, much backdirt of Ghirshman’s excavations was removed that contained, among many other things, bricks with impressions on one side that were apparently produced by rolling a wooden picture cylinder over the wet brick surface<sup>173</sup>. Ghirshman had recorded these bricks as being part of the lining of the “grande construction”. Based on comparisons with the painted pottery from Sialk VI, Hamid Fahimi and Holly Pittman both advocate a date in the Iron Age III period<sup>174</sup>.

Excavations in the area east of the “grande construction” in squares R18–20, however, have led to the identification of a badly preserved architectural layer on top of Sialk III layers that apparently were leveled before constructing level VI<sup>175</sup>. Ghirshman himself had already reported similar observations, concluding that the major building program of the period VI “grande construction” required leveling of the area beforehand<sup>176</sup>. Thus, for the first time after Ghirshman’s excavation it has become possible to clearly define assemblages of the Sialk VI period that were mostly known before from Sialk cemetery B.

One more new sounding was sunk at the north-eastern corner of the “grande construction” that will, hopefully, allow more secure statements regarding the construction history of that monument.

A new area targeted during the 4<sup>th</sup> season is located to the north of Ghirshman’s trench 1 on the South Mound. The uppermost layer here consists of a massive mudbrick architecture of the Sialk VI period. This building level had suffered a

<sup>171</sup> Malekzadeh 2004.

<sup>172</sup> Malek Shahmirzadi 2002b. Shahmirzadi’s proposal to reconstruct this building as a ziqqurat (Malek Shahmirzadi 2002a) with two ramparts, and to date it to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C. is not only not shared by some of his team members, but has also led to a very polemic and personal debate that will not be repeated here. Investigations of the construction continue.

<sup>173</sup> Chegini 2002.

<sup>174</sup> Fahimi 2004.

<sup>175</sup> Fahimi 2004; Fahimi 2006 (1384).

<sup>176</sup> Ghirshman 1939, 23–25.



**Fig. 59**  
Šamšīrgāh, general  
view of site  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Fahimi).



**Fig. 60**  
Šamšīrgāh, trench CX 57 (photograph courtesy H. Fahimi).



**Fig. 61**  
Šamšīrgāh, pithos  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Fahimi).



**Fig. 62**  
Šamširgāh, sickle  
found inside pithos  
(photograph courtesy  
H. Fahimi).



sudden collapse, with the complete wall torn off at its base. One room inside the building yielded an unusual pottery assemblage with several large storage jars and serving vessels<sup>177</sup>.

**Gandāb-e Kārand/Semnān:** The Iron Age settlement Kārand with its related graveyard and about two km away the graveyard of Gandāb are located in the vicinity of the village Rudbarak, dis-

trict Dāmḡān, at an altitude of c. 2080 m asl., making them some of highest excavated sites in Iran. Due to this high altitude (and the resulting cold climate), organic residues are preserved better than usual. The sites were excavated over the last three years under the direction of Abdol Mo'taleb Sharifi from the local Semnān office of ICHTO. The settlement revealed house residues consisting of earth floors and walls of pebble stones set into mud plaster. Inside the houses, a wooden column was standing as a roof support. The graveyards were located on the surrounding hilltops. They yielded a number of tombs of various types, constructed mostly from aligned standing stone slabs and occasionally sealed with a roof constructed from layers of wooden planks, branches and mud plaster. The dead usually lay in an extended position and were accompanied by a rich inventory, especially intriguing through a number of unusual metal objects. The material is in part comparable to the Qeytariye cemetery<sup>178</sup>, indicating a date of Iron Age II to III for both graveyards, though some graves may also belong to the Achaemenian period.

**Iron Age graveyards in Taleš/Gilān:** Rich Iron Age graveyards in Taleš have been a target for both scientific-archaeological and illegal excava-

**Fig. 63**  
Zar Bolāḡ,  
Iron Age building  
(photograph courtesy  
M. Malekzadeh).



<sup>177</sup> Helwing 2006 (1384).

<sup>178</sup> Kambakhsh-Fard 1991, 31–116.



**Fig. 64**  
Vasun Kahak,  
Iron Age building  
(photograph courtesy  
M. Malekzadeh).



**Fig. 65**  
Tappe Sialk, view of  
South mound and  
"grande construction"  
(photograph courtesy  
S. Malek Shamirzadi).



tion since the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>179</sup>, a trend uninterrupted since and re-enforced in the 1960–70's by the accidental discovery of the famous findings from Kaluraz, "Amlaš" and the Mārlik cemetery. Although many sites were thus destroyed some time ago, Iron Age tombs continue to be hit by construction work and/or looting. The accidental discovery of cairn tombs during road construction in the Kalkāl vicinity in 1991 finally led ICAR to the formulation of a large scale rescue excavation program in the Tāleš graveyards, conducted since 1993 under the direction of Mohammad Reza Khalatbari. These excavations are closely defined by the boundaries and necessities of construction sites but have, nevertheless, allowed the documentation of a number of graveyards and one dolmen. Reports on rescue work in six cairn graves in the vicinity of the village Vaske and in two further cairns in Mianrud, as well as the documentation on one true dolmen and seven further graves from the cemetery of Tul, next to the Āq Evlar/Mariān area that had already been described by Henry de Morgan, have recently been published<sup>180</sup>. Most fortunately, the 16 m long dolmen grave 1 at Tul was undisturbed. It was thus possible to fully document this monument. The walls of the dolmen consisted of a long chamber constructed from untrimmed large stone boulders and covered with elongated stone slabs. It contained the remains of at least 7 individuals, accompanied by an assemblage of pottery vessels of either grey or reddish color, composite bronze/iron weapons and one gold beaker of Iron Age II date. One important document is an inscribed bronze bracelet that was found in association with many other burial goods of the dolmen in the surface layers of the grave. The inscription<sup>181</sup> identifies the bracelet as a gift brought by a messenger from the Urartian king Ārgišṭi I. This provides a terminus post quem for the dating of the tomb, however the bracelet was certainly used over some time and was repaired in antiquity. Together with other Urartian inscriptions formerly found in the Gilān mountain, it shows the links between Urartu and the Gilān area, including Marlik, during the Iron Age. Based on these inscriptions, Khalatbari now identifies Tul as a local state on the edge of the country of Kādusi<sup>182</sup>.

The remaining graves from Tul are simple inhumations in pits or cairns and appear to be contemporary with the dolmen. The earlier of the six cairns uncovered at Vaske belong to Iron Age III and the area may have been re-used later, at the same time that the two graves at Mianrud were constructed.

**Jamšīdābād/Gilān:** Seven Iron Age graves were uncovered during rescue work of the ICHTO Gilān office, six of them pit graves and one with a dry stone wall. The excavator dates the material, among other jars with long unbridged spout, a terracotta figurine and some daggers with framed handle, to Iron Age I. However, comparisons with the younger graveyards of the Tehrān area indicate rather a date in Iron Age II or even III<sup>183</sup>.

**West Sefidrud survey – the Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān:** A program of systematic surveying in the mountainous landscape west of the Sefidrud has been conducted by the Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān since 2001<sup>184</sup>. The difficult terrain, with steep valley slopes and partly thick forest vegetation cover, imposed several methodological obstacles for systematic fieldwork<sup>185</sup>. By intensive field walking survey the Iran Japan expedition was nevertheless able to register numerous Iron Age graveyards and settlement sites dating from Iron Age II until the Islamic period. A sounding in the prominent settlement mound of Tappe Jalāliye (**Fig. 66; 67; 68**)<sup>186</sup> was then the second step to obtain a local stratified sequence from Iron Age II to the Parthian/Sassanian period that will serve as key reference for understanding the survey sites.

**Gohar Tappe/Golestān:** Gohar Tappe, located in the Behšahr plain immediately north of the Sari – Gorgān highway, is with several mounds within a total of 50 ha the largest site within the area covered by the East Māzandarān survey project, conducted by Ali Mahforuzi for the Gorgān office of ICHTO. The site was occupied probably from the Late Neolithic/or Chalcolithic period through

<sup>179</sup> Morgan 1905.

<sup>180</sup> Khalatbari 2004a; Khalatbari 2004b.

<sup>181</sup> The inscription has been read by various people (R. Baššāš Konzoq; Sh. Razmjou; M. Salvini) who agree on assigning the bracelet to Ārgišṭi I (Bašshash Kanzaq 2004; Razmjou 2004, also with reference to Salvini's reading, see 105 and note 2; Baššāš Konzoq 2005 (1384)).

<sup>182</sup> Khalatbari 2004a, 67.

<sup>183</sup> Kambakhsh-Fard 1991; A. Mousavi 2001.

<sup>184</sup> The Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān has kept to the strict policy of publishing annual preliminary reports, see Ohtsu et al. 2003; Ohtsu et al. 2004b; Ohtsu et al. 2004c, and Ohtsu et al. 2005.

<sup>185</sup> Besides the terrain, the characteristic construction methods in ancient Gilān that made ample use of wood and the regular occurrence of landslides covering old territories are factors to be considered in this area (Fahimi 2005; Fahimi/Kazuya 2005).

<sup>186</sup> Ohtsu et al. 2004a.

the Bronze and Iron Age. Excavations began with four trenches, most noteworthy one large scale exposure in the eastern part of the site in 2003 and have since proceeded to the virgin soil. Altogether, 23 archaeological strata were defined. The uppermost layers yielded a cemetery dating to the Late Bronze or early Iron Age (**Fig. 69; 70**) that had been dug into older settlement layers with rectangular buildings constructed with walls consisting of wooden posts and mud plaster.

The stratigraphic documentation so far allows the distinction of four major occupation periods in this part of the site: phase I dates to the Chalcolithic, phase II A–C to the Early-Middle and Late Bronze Age, phase III A–D to Iron Age II–III, and phase IV is the latest occupation. The crucial transition period from the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age I is not yet attested in the excavated areas on the site. It can be hoped that further excavation will provide a more solid basis for the ongoing Iron Age chronology debate that so far largely relies on cemetery data.

**Bāzgir/Golestān:** A hoard of metal objects was discovered in 2000 within the layers of an ancient settlement mound in the village of Bāzgir, close to the town Minudašt in the plain of Gorgān. A few objects were seized by the local authorities, and subsequently investigations of the findplace by members of the Gorgān office of ICHTO under the direction of Jebrail Nokandeh took place, who were able to document the find situation and to secure another 264 objects<sup>187</sup>. This hoard comprises bronze vessels and tools that can typologically be correlated with Hesār IIIC and can be dated to the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C.

### Bronze to Iron Age – comments

Outside the Elamite heartland with its Middle Elamite centers clustered around Susa in Kūzestān (see above) and Malyān-Anšan in Fars, the period following the Early Bronze Age remains less well understood. Sites in the Zāgros valleys continue with complex settlement stratigraphies, for example in Godin Tappe<sup>188</sup>, Tappe Gurān<sup>189</sup> and Tappe Giyān<sup>190</sup>. The occupation of Lorestān is



**Fig. 66**  
Tappe Jālāliye (photograph courtesy of Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān, H. Fahimi).



**Fig. 67**  
Tappe Jālāliye, section (photograph courtesy of Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān, H. Fahimi).



**Fig. 68**  
Tappe Jālāliye, figurine (photograph courtesy of Iran Japan Joint Archaeological Expedition to Gilān, H. Fahimi).

<sup>187</sup> Nokandeh et al. 1385 (2006); a detailed discussion of the hoard by Jebrail Nokandeh is in preparation and will be published in the next volume of AMIT.

<sup>188</sup> Some recent discussions on the interpretation of the Godin stratigraphy: Parzinger 2000; Rothman 2006.

<sup>189</sup> Thrane et al. 2001.

<sup>190</sup> Recently, M. Malekzadeh from ICAR began new investigations at Tappe Giyān, but results are not yet available.





**Fig. 69**  
Gohar Tappe,  
Iron Age grave  
(photograph courtesy  
A. Mahfrouzi).



**Fig. 70**  
Gohar Tappe,  
Iron Age pottery  
(photograph courtesy  
A. Mahfrouzi).

mostly known from the numerous graveyards<sup>191</sup>. In Central Iran, however, interruptions in settlement occupation are observed in various regions of the plateau, especially around the Dašt-e Kavir. Occupations at Tappe Hesār, Tappe Sialk and Arismān end around 2900 B.C., and the oasis cities Šahdād and Šahr-e Sukte come to a halt around 2000 B.C., and no subsequent settlements are attested yet. Northwestern Iran and the Lake Urmia area experienced a strong regionalization expressed through various styles of painted pottery such as the earlier “black-on-red ware” of the Haftvān VI tradition, and the later polychrome “Vān Urmia painted ware” and “Sagzābād ware”<sup>192</sup>, a trait that some authors link to the existence of pastoralist communities. North-eastern Iran provides solid settlement stratigraphies attesting uninterrupted occupation throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C., for example at Turang Tappe<sup>193</sup> and now at Gohar Tappe, apparently forming the southern outskirts of the larger Bronze Age cultural complex (BMCC) in Turkmenistan<sup>194</sup>. Continuous occupation can now also be postulated for southeastern Iran, where a sequence comparable to the Makrān<sup>195</sup> has recently become evident from the excavations at Konār Sandal North.

Seen against the background of this assumed void in highland Iran in the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C., models assuming the re-occupation of the highlands during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. by tribes migrating from the north have been postulated<sup>196</sup>. Although the idea may have some value and has found wide acceptance, the model requires re-modeling, both from the point of view of the theoretical background<sup>197</sup> especially with regard to the

<sup>191</sup> Results of the Belgian work in the Pušt-e Kuh is currently being published at an excellent speed and quality, Haerinck/Overlaet 1998; Haerinck/Overlaet 1999; Overlaet 2003. This provides now also a more reliable chronological frame than the one used by Vanden Berghe 1973, 4–5 that had been modelled on the Hasanlu phasing (see below). See Overlaet 2003, 8–10 fig. 3 for a discussion of the new chronological chart.

<sup>192</sup> Özfrat 2001; Piller 2004b.

<sup>193</sup> Deshayes 1968.

<sup>194</sup> For a brief impression, see Lamberg-Karlovsky 1989; Sarianidi 1989; Sarianidi 2005.

<sup>195</sup> Besenval/Marquis 1993; Besenval 1994.

<sup>196</sup> Cuyler Young 1967; Deshayes 1969; Cuyler Young 1985.

<sup>197</sup> This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of archaeological migration theories. For a general critique on equating material culture and ethnic entities, see Kramer 1977. For a review of the pro- and contra-arguments of archaeological migration theories, see Anthony 1990; a conference held at the German Institute in Berlin in 1999 dealt exclusively with migrations, with a focus on the late 2nd to early 1st mill. B.C. (Eichmann/Parzinger 2001); among the various papers published there, contributions by T. Götzelt, V. Ol'chovskij, R. Dittmann, U. Löw, P. Kohl and A. Çilingir-öglü immediately touch upon the Iranian topic.

still prevalent ethnic interpretations that are now mostly rejected<sup>198</sup>, and from the perspective of data resolution<sup>199</sup>. Usually, the beginning of the Iron Age in highland Iran is linked to the appearance of grey pottery, mostly in the numerous graves that are another marker of the Iron Age (see below). Since grey pottery is already part of the regular assemblages in 4<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C. Tappe Hesār (where it persists until c. 1700 B.C.) and Tappe Sialk (III–IV, as a minor part of the assemblage), this is obviously not a valid marker. It has also been remarked that gray pottery comes in many varieties that do not necessarily all refer to one single chronological horizon<sup>200</sup>, and as a consequence, it has recently been proposed to distinguish earlier and regional grey ware groups for the Middle and Late Bronze Age<sup>201</sup> and for the Iron Age<sup>202</sup>. Nevertheless, it will only be after the excavation and study of new stratigraphic settlement sequences, including absolute dating, such as they hopefully will soon be available from Tappe Ozbaki, Tappe Sialk, Tappe Qoli Darvīš and Gohar Tappe, that it will become possible to properly understand the development of the Iron Age in Central Iran.

<sup>198</sup> Pillar 2004a, 316.

<sup>199</sup> Two alternative conventions for the phasing of the Iranian Iron Age are in use (see Kroll 1984, 15–18 for a discussion). The radiocarbon-dated Hasanlu sequence forms the key to the American system that distinguishes 3 major phases Iron Age I to III (Cuyler Young 1965; Dyson/Muscarella 1989; IA I = Hasanlu V = c. 1500–1200 B.C.; IA II = Hasanlu IV = c. 1200–800 B.C.; IA III Hasanlu III = 800–550 B.C.), and uses an additional Iron Age IV for the Achaemenid period (Cuyler Young 1975, 192). This system uses apparent breaks in the architectural sequence between layers VI and V at Hasanlu to define the beginning of the Iron Age. Although this is convincing from the point of view of material culture continuities, one consequence is that the defining factor of the Iron Age – iron – only appears in Iron Age II. A second consequence is that the time span remaining for the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, sandwiched between an extensive Early Bronze Age that seems to cover the larger part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. B.C., and the beginning of the Iron Age, shrinks to less than 1000 years. One major element linking the pre-Iron Age I levels Hasanlu VI and Dinkā Tappe IV (consequently the Late Bronze Age here) to the Mesopotamian chronology is the appearance of the so-called Kābur ware, a *leitfossil* of the Syro-Mesopotamian earlier Middle Bronze Age (see Dittmann 1990, for a criticism). Alternatively, the German school used a system based on data obtained from settlement excavations in Eastern Anatolia labelled “Eisenzeit I–III” (Hauptmann 1969/70; Bartl 1994). The German sequence Eisenzeit I, however, begins only around 1200 B.C. in correlation to the fall of the Hittite empire in Central Anatolia, so a direct translation of the term is misleading. In comparison with the Hasanlu sequence, one can roughly equate Iron Age I with “Spätbronzezeit” (c. 1500–1200 B.C.), Iron Age II with Eisenzeit I (c. 1200–1000 B.C.), and Iron Age III with “Eisenzeit II” (c. 1000–900 B.C.). This is the system used in all publications by W. Kleiss, S. Kroll and P. Calmeyer.

<sup>200</sup> Dittmann 1990.

<sup>201</sup> Pillar 2004b.

<sup>202</sup> A. Mousavi 2001.

Dolmen and stone cairn burials are mostly found in northwestern Iran, and extramural graveyards are another feature characterizing the Iranian Iron Age. It has often been assumed that the dolmen may be related to a nomadic population, a hypothesis that, however, cannot be confirmed at this current state of research. They form part of a wider burial tradition with dolmen and kurgans that also use anthropomorphic stelae as grave markers. Although rarely found in situ, the stelae seem to have been an integral part of burial mounds<sup>203</sup>. Most spectacular examples of such stelae have recently been found in Hakkari<sup>204</sup>, associated with painted Van-Urmia ware<sup>205</sup>. Against this background, the find situation of the Meškinšahr stelae becomes all the more interesting: apparently, they had been erected in long standing rows, not in direct association with particular graves, and they seem to be of similar age as the Hakkari stelae, since they later were re-used as building material in the Iron Age graves there. The tradition of anthropomorphic stelae, however, lives on for a long time<sup>206</sup>.

During the early 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C., outside (Assyrian) textual sources referring to the western part of Iran become available, and the archaeological evidence can be confronted with historical sources. The main players are, from north to south, Urartu, Mannea and later Media. While almost no fieldwork has recently been carried out in the Urartian sites of Iran, it is noteworthy that major excavations in Ayanis, ancient Rusahinili Eiduru-kai<sup>207</sup> on the Lake Van with its well-preserved temple including a spectacular temple inventory, but also with its extensive outer town<sup>208</sup> add new facets to our knowledge about Urartian settlements.

The identification and excavation of the Median capital Izirtu at Tappe Qālāyčī and the uncovering of a columned hall inside the Ziwiye hill-top fortress are important contributions to our knowledge of that area. The boundaries between these two areas, however, remain to be properly defined<sup>209</sup>.

For the Median period, finally, the fortress from Tappe Ozbaki marks a new site with such a structure besides Godin II and Nuš-i Jān, making the inclusion of the western Iranian Plateau into the Median sphere of influence highly likely. However, much new information on this period de-

<sup>203</sup> Schachner 2001, 124 fig. 5.

<sup>204</sup> Sevin 2001; Sevin/Özfirat 2001.

<sup>205</sup> Özfirat 2001.

<sup>206</sup> Belli 2003.

<sup>207</sup> Çilingiroğlu/Salvini 2001.

<sup>208</sup> Stone/Zimansky 2003.

<sup>209</sup> Biscione 2003, 171–177 for a discussion of the Urartian settlements around the Urmia Lake.



rives not from fieldwork but from historical studies<sup>210</sup>. How far the Median land extended, and whether one can even speak of something like a Median “empire”, has been subject to debate recently. On the one side, scholars taking Herodot at face value believe that Media extended far into Anatolia until the river Halys (Kızılırmak) and even claim the existence of a Median fortified capital far in Inner Anatolia<sup>211</sup>. On the other side, historical texts remain fairly ambiguous with regard to the internal organization of the Medes and the extension of their sphere of influence – there is apparently no good reason to assume anything like united political structure such as a “Median state”, let alone empire<sup>212</sup>. Only further fieldwork combined with textual evidence will allow us to learn more about this complex period.

As for the regions outside the reaches of historical texts, we still entirely rely on archaeological data. The finding of a bracelet with an Urartian inscription in the Tul dolmen in Gilān proves contacts, though, and may even consequence a reconsideration of the dating of the famous Mārlik cemetery. Besides, the inventories from the numerous Iron Age graveyards currently under excavation in northern and central Iran may provide new data that will allow us to draw a much more detailed picture of regional and chronological groups and to replace older views that assume general uniformity of the Iranian Iron Age. Nevertheless, the discovery, excavation and study of settlement sites, such as Tappe Jālāliye in Gilān, Gohar Tappe in Māzandarān, or Sialk and Qoli Darvīš in the central regions of the Iranian Plateau will provide the most crucial contribution to a better understanding of the Iranian Iron Age.

## Rock Art Studies

Rock art is almost completely unknown in Iran. However, over the last decades, some sites with rock engravings have been recorded. These are usually applied by chipping off the surface of the natural rock. In arid environments with strong wind erosion that leads to the formation of a

slightly glossy and dark so-called “desert patina”: the picked engravings that have exposed the lighter-colored mother rock form a vivid contrast to the patinated background. Over time, the rock engravings are again themselves covered with newly forming patina. Different stages of patination of the engravings may help for relative dating. However, substantial variations of patination have been observed, depending on the exposure to weathering<sup>213</sup>.

Judging from the motifs mostly found among these engravings, it seems that this rock art was created by pastoralist groups seasonally using the respective territories. None of the engravings can be dated securely but it seems that most date between Iron Age and early modern times. However, it cannot be excluded that also older rock engravings exist.

**Arasbārān/East Āzarbāijān:** In the vicinity of the Sungun copper mines, Jalal Rafifar from the University of Tehrān detected several groups of rock engravings depicting animals and humans<sup>214</sup>. One group shows caprids and deer surrounded by schematic humans.

**Varzaqān/North Āzarbāidjān:** In the Hunand district of East Āzarbāijān province, a group of rock engravings has been documented by Jalal Rafifar<sup>215</sup> from the University of Tehrān. The site consists of a group of rocks scattered over an open slope, with about 200 preserved rock engravings, human and animals. The human figures can be identified as male (50 engravings) and female (20). The animal depictions show ibex, deer and snake. A larger engraved contour of a deer head was filled with ochre.

**Ourāmān (published as “Hawraman”)/Kordestān:** Since the year 2000, Jamil Lahafian has documented rock art in the province of Kordestān. In the Ourāmān area, located on the south-western border of the province towards Kermānshāh, rock engravings showing ibex, goats and wheels were recorded in the vicinity of a camp site<sup>216</sup>.

**Sārāl/Kordestān:** In the Sārāl area, rock engravings are found in the open, preferably along the river valleys. The motifs documented there by Jamil Lahafian include wild animals such as deer and elk, some actually being hunted, besides

<sup>210</sup> Various excellent contributions in Lanfranchi et al. 2004.

<sup>211</sup> Summers 2000 tentatively identifies the Iron Age fortress at Kerkenes Dağ with the Median Pteria. This view has been thoroughly criticized for example by Rollinger (2004 a), a critique reconfirmed by the 2003 discovery of Phrygian inscriptions on the site (Rollinger 2004 a, 326).

<sup>212</sup> The traditional view that sees the Medes as the predecessors of the later Achaemenid Empire has recently been challenged and seems indeed to be much too simplistic (Lanfranchi et al. 2004). The Medes appear in various texts as allies of the Babylonians against Assyria, but after the fall of Assyria they seem not to have formed a coherent political unit (Rollinger 2004 b).

<sup>213</sup> Bemmann/König 1994, 5.

<sup>214</sup> Rafifar 2002 (1381).

<sup>215</sup> Rafifar 2005 (1384).

<sup>216</sup> Lahafian 2004, 4–5 fig. 3–6.

caprids<sup>217</sup>. Human depictions occur as well, showing hunters aiming with bow and arrow at the animals.

**Dehgurān and Ghamčoughāi /Kordestān:** Jamil Lahafian reports more petroglyphs in the other parts of the Kordestān province, including hunting scenes with wild animals in Dehgurān<sup>218</sup>, and geometric signs in Ghamčoughai<sup>219</sup>.

**Karaftu Cave/Kordestān:** Geometric signs such as lozenges, but also simple animal engravings, exist also in the Karaftu Cave and are reported by Jamil Lahafian<sup>220</sup>.

**Divin valley – Alvand/Hamedān:** The stone engravings on free-standing rock boulders in the Divin Valley reported by Mohammad R. Sarraf<sup>221</sup> from the University of Tehrān consist of dense groups of linear style caprids, closely resembling the Kuh-e Ernān images. No dating evidence is available for those.

**Timāre/Esfahān:** A large group of rock engravings, mostly picked engravings on free-standing rocks, has been recorded by Morteza Farhadi from the area around Timāre, in the Golpāyghān district<sup>222</sup>. The images largely represent animals, caprids and deer among them. Hunting scenes involving dogs, and/or humans also occur. Most probably, these images date from various periods, including the Islamic period, since several inscriptions have also been recorded.

**Mount Ernān/Yazd:** The free-standing conus of Kuh-e Ernān in the southern Yazd province has been a regular campsite for nomadic tribes since long ago. A natural spring is located at the northern foot, today location of a small shrine. Above that shrine, on the northern slope of the mount and below the steep rock cliffs that form its upper part, rock boulders with picked engravings are found. Dinyār Shahzādi from the Yazd office of ICHTO has recorded these engravings<sup>223</sup> and taken measures to protect the site for the future. The engravings show mostly hunting scenes. Humans are shown walking or on horseback, armed with an arsenal of bows and arrows, axes or spears. They target or are about to kill large ibex.

One dog with a curled-up tail is also depicted. The style of these rock-engravings is almost completely linear. Based on the weapons depicted with the humans, Shahzadi suggests a date for those engravings no earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. B.C. Comparing the simple linear design of the engravings with the rock image station from northern Pakistan, however, it seems that such linear depictions were in use much longer, into the 1<sup>st</sup> mill. A.D.<sup>224</sup> That the place had been in use already long before that is evident, however, from a collection of chert tools and few pottery sherds from an abri site at the foot of the mount that are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> mill. B.C.<sup>225</sup>

One exceptional fragment of engraved rock, said to originate from Mount Ernān, is on display in the “Zendān-e Eskandar” in Yazd. This block shows a more elaborate hunting scene: a horseman armed with a macehead and probably a lasso, and assisted by two dogs again with curled-up tails, attacks a leopard. The animals are shown in full motion, the joints of the legs bent. The body contours are indicated, the panther’s fur is hatched, and all claws of the animals’ paws are shown. At the lower left edge of the block a Persian name is inscribed. Judging from the patination of the block, the is inscribed could be contemporary with the engravings. Nevertheless, the treatment of the panther depiction closely resembles rock engravings from the Karakorum Highway/northern Pakistan that have been classified as “Achaemenid style”<sup>226</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup> Lahafian 2004, 5–7 fig. 7–12 and front cover showing situation in the field.

<sup>218</sup> Lahafian 2004, 7.

<sup>219</sup> Lahafian 2004, 9.

<sup>220</sup> Lahafian 2004, 7–9 fig. 13.

<sup>221</sup> Sarraf 1997.

<sup>222</sup> For illustrations, see Farhadi 1998 (1377).

<sup>223</sup> Shahzadi 1997.

<sup>224</sup> Difficult to date also in the Karakorum area, but mostly assigned to A.D. 1<sup>st</sup> mill., cp. the human and animal depictions from Oshibat (Bemmann/König 1994, esp. block 25).

<sup>225</sup> Shahzadi 1997, 137.

<sup>226</sup> Compare, for example, a lion engraving from Thalpan I (Bandini-König 2003, 161 No. 30: 310 pl. 60).



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## Abstract

Following a lacuna in active fieldwork during the 1980s, archaeological fieldwork in Iran has been vigorously resumed since the mid 1990s. However, the results of this work remains largely unknown to the non-Persian-speaking public. This reports seeks to introduce the results of archaeological fieldwork carried out in Iran over the last decade, thereby focussing on the periods from prehistory to Iron Age III, and to discuss the impact of these new results upon currently prevailing opinions regarding the cultural development in Iran.